MISS FERRIER'S NOVELS

"I write but of familiar stuffe,
Because my stile is lowe;
I fear to wade in weightie works,
Or past my reach to rowe."

GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

THE INHERITANCE

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARRIAGE"

"Si la noblesse est vertu, elle se perd par tout ce qui n'est pas vertueux ; et si elle n'est pas vertu, c'est peu de chose."

LA BRUYÈRE.

Edinburgh Edition

FIDE ET FIDUCIA

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER I.

> " Strange is it, that our bloods
> Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,
> Would quite confound distinction, yet stand off
> In differences so mighty."
>
> *All's Well that Ends Well.*

It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that there is no passion so deeply rooted in human nature as that of pride. Whether of self or of family, of deeds done in our own bodies, or deeds done in the bodies of those who lived hundreds of years before us—all find some foundation on which to build *their* Tower of Babel. Even the dark uncertain future becomes a bright field of promise to the eye of pride, which, like Banquo's bloody ghost, can smile even upon the dim perspective of posthumous greatness.

As the noblest attribute of man, family pride had been cherished time immemorial by the noble race of Rossville. Deep and incurable, therefore, was the wound inflicted on all its members by the marriage of

the Honourable Thomas St. Clair, youngest son of the Earl of Rossville, with the humble Miss Sarah Black, a beautiful girl of obscure origin and no fortune. In such an union there was everything to exasperate, nothing to mollify, the outraged feelings of the Rossville family, for youth and beauty were all that Mrs. St. Clair had to oppose to pride and ambition. The usual consequences, therefore, were such as always have, and probably always will, accompany unequal alliances, viz. the displeasure of friends, the want of fortune, the world's dread laugh, and, in short, all the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to when it fails in its allegiance to blood. Yet there are minds fitted to encounter and to overcome even these—minds possessed of that inherent nobility which regard honour as something more than a mere hereditary name, and which seek the nobler distinction, open to all, in the career of some honourable profession. But Mr. St. Clair's mind was endowed with no such powers; for he was a man of weak intellects and indolent habits, with just enough of feeling to wish to screen himself from the poverty and contempt his marriage had brought upon him. After hanging on for some time in hopes of a reconciliation with his family, and finding all attempts in vain, he at length consented to banish himself, and the object of their contumely, to some remote quarter of the world, upon condition of receiving a suitable allowance so long as they should remain abroad. The unfortunate pair, thus doomed to unwilling exile, therefore retired to

France, where Mr. St. Clair's mind soon settled into that state which acquires its name from the character of its possessor, and, according to that, is called fortitude, resignation, contentment, or stupidity. There, too, they soon sunk into that oblivion which is sometimes the portion of the living as well as the dead. His father's death, which happened some years after, made no alteration in his circumstances. The patrimony to which he expected to succeed was settled on his children, should he have any, and a slender life annuity was his only portion.

The natural wish of every human being, the weakest as well as the wisest, seems to be, to leave some memorial of themselves to posterity—something, if but to tell how their fathers thought or fought, at least to show how they talked or walked. This wish Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair possessed in common with others; but year after year passed away, and it still remained ungratified, while every year it became a still stronger sentiment, as death seemed gradually clearing the way to the succession. At the time of his marriage Mr. St. Clair had been the youngest of five sons; but three of his brothers had fallen victims to war or pestilence, and there now only remained the present Earl and himself, both alike childless.

At length, when hope was almost extinct, Mrs. St. Clair announced herself to be in the way of becoming a mother, and the emigrants resolved upon returning to their native land, that their child might there first

see the light. Previous to taking this step, however, the important intelligence was communicated to Lord Rossville, and also their intention of immediately proceeding to Scotland, if agreeable to him; at the same time expressing a wish that he would favour them with his advice and opinion, as they would be entirely guided by him in their plans.

Lord Rossville was a man who liked to be consulted, and to overturn every plan which he himself had not arranged; and as Mr. St. Clair had spoken of taking shipping from Bordeaux, where they then were, and so going by sea to Scotland, Lord Rossville, in his answer, expressed his decided disapprobation of such a scheme, in Mrs. St. Clair's situation, and in stormy winter weather. But he enclosed a route by way of Paris, which he had made out for them with his own hand, and directed them, upon their arrival there, to signify the same to him, and there to remain until he had resolved upon what was next to be done, as he had by no means made up his mind as to the propriety, or at least the necessity, of their returning to Scotland. The packet also contained an order for a sum of money, and letters to some friends of his own at Paris, who would be of service to Mrs. St. Clair. So far, all was kind and conciliating, and the exiles, after much delay, set forth upon their journey, according to the rules prescribed by the Earl; but, within a day's journey of Paris, Mrs. St. Clair was taken prematurely ill, and there, at an obscure village, gave birth to a daughter, which, as Mr. St. Clair

sensibly remarked, though not so good as a boy, was yet better than nothing at all. As the Salique law was not in force in the Rossville family, the sex of the child was, indeed, a matter of little consequence, save in the eyes of those sturdy sticklers for man's supremacy. Its health and strength were, therefore, the chief objects of consideration, and, although born in the seventh month, it was a remarkably fine thriving baby, which Mrs. St. Clair, contrary to the common practice of mothers, ascribed entirely to the excellence of its nurse.

They had been fortunate enough to meet with a woman of a superior class, who, having recently lost her husband and her own infant, had readily adopted this one, and as readily transferred to it that abundant stock of love and tenderness which those dealers in the milk of human kindness always have so freely to bestow on their nursling for the time. Mrs. St. Clair's recovery was tedious, and her general health she declared to be so much impaired that she could not think of encountering the severity of a northern climate. Instead of prosecuting their journey, therefore, they retired to the south of France, and, after moving about for some time, finally settled there. This was not what the Earl had intended, for, although pride still opposed his brother's return to Scotland, he had, at the same time, wished to have the family somewhere within the sphere of his observation and control—the more especially as, having lately separated from his lady, his brother's child

might now be regarded as presumptive heiress to the family honours. He had purposed, and indeed pressed, to have the little Gertrude transmitted to him, that she might have the advantage of being trained up under his own eye, but to this Mrs. St. Clair would not consent. She declared, in the most polite but decided manner, her determination never to part with her child, but promised that, as soon as her health was sufficiently re-established, they would return to Britain, and that Lord Rossville should have the direction and superintendence, if he pleased, of the young heiress's education. But some obstacle, real or pretended, always arose to prevent the accomplishment of this plan, till, at length, Mr. St. Clair was struck with a palsy, which rendered it impossible for him to be removed. Dead to all the purposes of life, he lingered on for several years, one of those melancholy mementoes, who, with a human voice and human shape, have survived everything human besides.

At length death claimed him as his own, and his widow lost no time in announcing the event to the Earl, and in craving his advice and protection for herself and daughter. A very polite, though long-winded, reply was received from Lord Rossville, in which he directed that Mrs. and Miss St. Clair should immediately repair to Rossville Castle, there to remain until he should have had time and opportunity fully to digest the plans he had formed for the pupillage of his niece. This invitation was too advantageous to

be refused, even although the terms in which it was couched were not very alluring either to the mother or daughter. With a mixture of pleasure and regret, they therefore hastened to exchange the gay vineyards and bright suns of France for the bleak hills and frowning skies of Scotland.

CHAPTER II.

"Hope well to have, hate not past thought;
For cruel storms fair calms have brought:
After sharp showers the sun shines fair,
Hope comes likewise after despair."
RICHARD ALISON.

MANY years had elapsed since Mrs. St. Clair had left her native land, and those who had known her then could scarcely have recognised her now, so completely had the *tout ensemble* changed its character. The blooming hoyden, with her awkward habits and provincial dialect, had been gradually transformed into the beautiful woman, graceful in her movements, and polished, though elaborate in her manners. Though now long past her meridian, she was still handsome, and to superficial observers could be captivating; but the change was merely outward, proceeding from no innate delicacy of thought or ennobling principle of action. It was solely the result of nice tact, knowledge of the world, and long intercourse with foreigners. The mind remained the same, although the matter had been modified.

In her early days her pride and ambition had been excited by making what was considered a splendid

alliance, and it was not till her understanding was thoroughly ripened that she made the mortifying discovery that high birth, when coupled with personal insignificance, adds no more to real distinction than a flaming sign does to an ill-kept inn. It was this disappointment which, operating on a naturally proud and violent temper, had brought into play all the worst qualities of her nature, and made her look upon the world as indeed a stage, where all the men and women were merely players. To act a grand and conspicuous part, and regain the station her husband's pusillanimity had lost, was therefore now her sole aim.

It rarely happens that one artificial mind can succeed in forming another—we seldom imitate what we do not love. There is something in human nature which recoils from an artificial character even more than from a faulty one, and where the attempt fails, the revulsion generally produces a character of a totally different stamp. Mrs. St. Clair had spared no pains to render her daughter as great an adept in dissimulation as she was herself; but all her endeavours had proved unsuccessful, and Miss St. Clair remained pretty much as nature had formed her—a mixture of wheat and tares, flowers and weeds. There existed no sort of sympathy or congeniality of mind between the mother and daughter—there seemed little even of that natural affection which often supplies the want of kindred feeling, or similar tastes, and which serves to bind together hearts which no human process ever could have brought to amalgamate. Without any

point of resemblance in their characters or ideas, there was consequently little interchange of thought, and when Gertrude did address her mother, it was more from the overflowings of an open heart and buoyant spirits than from any reciprocity of feeling.

"How I wish I had Prince Houssain's glass," exclaimed she, as they drew near the borders of Scotland, "that I might take a peep at the people I am going amongst—a single glance would suffice to give me some idea of them, or, at least, to show whether they are the sort of persons it will be possible for me to love."

"You have formed very high and somewhat presumptuous ideas of your own powers of discrimination, it seems," said Mrs. St. Clair, with a disdainful smile; "but I should humbly conceive that my knowledge and experience might prove almost as useful as your own observations or theories are likely to do."

"I beg your pardon, mamma, but I did not know you had been acquainted with the Rossville family."

"I am not personally acquanted with any of them —I never was—I never would have been, but for you; it is upon your account I now stoop to a reconciliation, which otherwise I would have spurned as I have been spurned." She spoke with vehemence, then in a calmer tone proceeded: "It is natural that you should wish to know something of the relations you are going amongst, since there is nothing more desirable than a previous knowledge of those whom it is necessary we should please. But it is only from

report I can speak of the Rossville family, though even from report we may form a tolerably accurate idea of people's general character. Report, then, says that Lord Rossville is an obstinate, troublesome, tiresome, well-behaved man; that his sister, Lady Betty, who resides with him, is a harmless, dull, inquisitive old woman; then there are nephews, sister's sons, to one of whom you are probably destined; there is Mr. Delmour, a weak, formal parliamentary drudge, son of Lord Somebody Delmour, and nephew to the Duke of Burlington, and his brother, Colonel Delmour, a fashionable, unprincipled gamester; and Mr. Lyndsay, a sort of quakerish, methodistical, sombre person—all, of course, brimful of pride and prejudice. Nevertheless, beware how you contradict prejudices, even knowing them to be such, for the generality of people are much more tenacious of their prejudices than of anything belonging to them; and should you hear them run out in raptures at such a prospect as this"—pointing to the long bleak line of Scottish coast—"even this you too must admire; even this cold shrubless tract of bare earth and stone walls, and yon dark stormy sea, you will perhaps be told (and you must assent), are fairer than the lilied fields and limpid waters of Languedoc."

Miss St. Clair remained silent for a few moments contemplating the scene before her; at last she said, "Indeed, mamma, I do think there is something fine in such a scene as this, although I can scarcely tell in what the charm consists, or why it should be more

deeply felt than scenes of greater beauty and grandeur; but there seems to me something so simple and majestic in such an expanse of mere earth and water, that I feel as if I were looking on nature at the beginning of the creation, when only the sea and the dry land had been formed."

"Rather after the fall, methinks," said Mrs. St. Clair, with a bitter smile, as she drew her cloak round her; "at least, I feel at present much more as if I had been expelled from Paradise than as if I were entering it."

The scene was indeed a dreary one, though calculated to excite emotions in the mind true to nature in all her varied aspects; and more especially in the youthful heart, where novelty alone possesses a charm sufficient to call forth its admiration. The dark lead-coloured ocean lay stretched before them, its dreary expanse concealed by lowering clouds, while the sea-fowl clamouring in crowds to the shore announced the coming storm. The yet unclothed fields were black with crows, whose discordant cries mingled with the heavy monotonous sound of the waves as they advanced with sullen roar and broke with idle splash. A thick mist was gradually spreading over every object—an indescribable shivering was felt by every human thing which had bones and skin to feel—in short, it was an east wind; and the effect of an east wind upon the east coast of Scotland may have been experienced but cannot be described.

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, as

her teeth chattered in her head, and her skin began to rise into what is vulgarly termed goose-skin.

"You do look ill, mamma—you are quite a pale blue, and I certainly feel as I never did before;" and Miss St. Clair pulled up the windows, and wrapped her *roquelaire* still closer. The French valet and abigail, who sat on the dicky, looked round with pitiful faces, as though to ask, "*Qu'est-ce que cela?*" Even the postilion seemed affected in the same manner, for, stopping his horses, he drew forth a ponderous many-caped greatcoat, and buttoning it up to his nose, with a look that bade defiance to the weather, he pursued his route. The air grew colder and colder; the mist became thicker and thicker; the shrieks of the sea-fowl louder and louder; till a tremendous hail shower burst forth, and dashed with threatening violence against the windows of the carriage. The undaunted driver was compelled to bend his purple face beneath its pitiless pelting, while he urged his horses as if to escape from its influence.

"This is Scotland, and this is the month of May!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, with a groan, as she looked on the whitened fields, and her thoughts recurred to the smiling skies and balmy vernal airs of Languedoc.

"Scotland has given us rather a rude welcome, I must confess," said her daughter; "but, happily, I am not superstitious; and, see! it is beginning to smile upon us already."

In a few minutes the clouds rolled away; the sun burst forth in all his warmth and brilliancy; the

tender wheat glittered in the moisture; the lark flew exulting aloft; the sea-fowl spread their white wings, and skimmed over the blue waters; the postilion slackened his pace and put off his greatcoat: such is Scotland's varying clime—such its varying scenery!

CHAPTER III.

> "My father's house!
> ———Send me not thence
> Dishonour'd, but to wealth, to greatness rais'd."
>
> SOPHOCLES.

IT was on a lovely evening that the travellers reached their destination near the western coast of Scotland. The air was soft, and the setting sun shed his purple light on the mountains which formed the background of the Rossville domains. The approach wound along the side of a river which possessed all the characteristic variety of a Scottish stream—now gliding silently along, or seeming to stand motionless in the crystal depth of some shaded pool, now chafing and gurgling, with lulling sound, over its pebbly bed; while its steep banks presented no less changing features. In some places they were covered with wood, now in the first tints of spring—the formal poplar's pale hue and the fringed larch's tender green mingling with the red seared leaf of the oak and the brown opening bud of the sycamore. In others, gray rocks peeped from amidst the lichens and creeping plants which covered them as with a garment of many colours, and the wild rose decked them with its transient blossoms.

Farther on the banks became less precipitous, and

gradually sank into a gentle slope, covered with smooth green turf, and sprinkled with trees of noble size. The only sounds that mingled with the rush of the stream were the rich full song of the blackbird, the plaintive murmur of the wood pigeon, and the abrupt but not unmusical note of the cuckoo. Gertrude gazed with ecstasy on all around, and her heart swelled with delight as she thought this fair scene she was destined to inherit; and a vague poetical feeling of love and gratitude to Heaven caused her to raise her eyes, swimming in tearful rapture, to the Giver of all good. But it was merely the overflowing of a young, enraptured, and enthusiastic mind; no deeper principle was felt or understood—no trembling mingled with her joy—no dark future cast its shadow on the mirror imagination presented to her; but visions of pomp and power, and wealth and grandeur—visions of earthly bliss—swam before those eyes which yet were raised from earth to heaven. She was roused from her reverie by a deep sigh, or rather groan, from her mother, who leant back in the carriage, seemingly overcome by some painful sensation either of mind or body. Miss St. Clair was accustomed to hear her mother sigh, and even groan, upon very slight occasions, sometimes upon no occasion at all; but, at present, there was something that betokened an intensity of suffering too sincere for feigning.

"You are ill, mamma!" exclaimed she, in terror, as she looked on her mother's pale and agitated countenance.

It was some moments ere Mrs. St. Clair could find voice to answer; but at length, in much emotion, she said—

"Is it surprising that I should feel at approaching that house from which my husband and myself were exiled—nay, were even denied an entrance? Can you imagine that I should be unmoved at the thoughts of beholding that family by whom we were rendered outcasts, and whom I have only known as my bitterest enemies?"

Mrs. St. Clair's voice and her colour both rose as she enumerated her injuries.

"Oh! mamma, do not at such a time suffer your mind to dwell upon those painful recollections; it is natural that melancholy thoughts should suggest themselves: but—— ah! there is the castle," cried the young heiress, forgetting all her mother's wrongs as the stately mansion now burst upon their view; and again her heart exulted as she looked on its lofty turrets and long range of arched windows glittering in the golden rays of the setting sun. In another moment they found themselves at the entrance; a train of richly-liveried servants were stationed to receive them. Mrs. St. Clair's agitation increased; she stopped and leant upon her daughter, who feared she would have fainted; but making an effort, she followed the servant, who led the way to the presence of his Lord, when, quickly recovering her self-possession, she advanced, and gracefully presented her daughter, saying—

"To your Lordship's generous protection I commit my fatherless child."

Lord Rossville was a bulky, portentous-looking person, with nothing marked in his physiognomy except a pair of very black, elevated eyebrows, which gave an unvarying expression of solemn astonishment to his countenance. He had a husky voice, and a very tedious elocution. He was some little time of preparing an answer to this address, but at last he replied,—

"I shall, rest assured, madam, make a point of fulfilling, to the utmost of my power and abilities, the highly-important duties of the parental office."

He then saluted his sister-in-law and niece, and taking a hand of each, led them to a tall, thin, gray old woman, with a long, inquisitive-looking nose, whom he named as Lady Betty St. Clair.

Lady Betty rose from her seat with that sort of deliberate bustle which generally attends the rising up and the sitting down of old ladies, and may be intended to show that it is not an everyday affair with them to practise such condescension. Having taken off her spectacles, Lady Betty carefully deposited them within a large work-basket, out of which protruded a tiger's head in worsted-work, and a volume of a novel. She next lifted a cambric handkerchief from off a fat sleepy lap-dog which lay upon her knees, and deposited it on a cushion at her feet. She then put aside a small fly-table, which stood before her as a sort of out-work, and thus freed from all

impediments, welcomed her guests, and after regarding them with looks only expressive of stupid curiosity, she motioned to them to be seated, and replaced herself with even greater commotion than she had risen up. Such a reception was not calculated to call forth feelings of the most pleasurable kind, and Gertrude felt chilled at manners so different from the bland courtesy to which she had been accustomed, and her heart sank at the thoughts of being domesticated with people who appeared so dull and unpleasing. The very apartment seemed to partake of the character of its inmates; it had neither the solid magnificence of ancient times, nor the elegant luxury of the present age; neither was there any of the grotesque ornaments of antiquity, nor the amusing litter of fashionable baubles for the eye to have recourse to. Lady Betty's huge work-basket was the only indication that the apartment was inhabited; an air of stiff propriety —of splendid discomfort—reigned throughout.

The usual, and more than the usual, questions were put by the Earl and his sister, as to time and distance, and roads and drivers, and inns and beds, and weather and dust; and all were answered by Mrs. St. Clair in the manner most calculated to conciliate those with whom she conversed; till, in the course of half-an-hour, Lord Rossville was of opinion that she was one of the best-bred, best-informed, most sensible, lady-like women he had ever conversed with—and his Lordship was not a person who was apt to form hasty opinions upon any subject.

Lord Rossville's character was one of those whose traits, though minute, are as strongly marked as though they had been cast in a large mould. But, as not even the powers of the microscope can impart strength and beauty to the object it magnifies, so no biographer could have exaggerated into virtues the petty foibles of his mind. Yet the predominating qualities were such as often cast a false glory around their possessor—for the love of power and the desire of human applause were the engrossing principles of his soul. In strong, capacious minds, and in great situations, these incentives often produce brilliant results; but in a weak, contracted mind, moving in the narrow sphere of domestic life, they could only circulate through the thousand little channels that tend to increase or impair domestic happiness. As he was not addicted to any particular vice, he considered himself as a man of perfect virtue; and having been, in some respects, very prosperous in his fortune, he was thoroughly satisfied that he was a person of the most consummate wisdom. With these ideas of himself, it is not surprising that he should have deemed it his bounden duty to direct and manage every man, woman, child, or animal who came within his sphere, and that, too, in the most tedious and tormenting manner. Perhaps the most teasing point in his character was his ambition—the fatal ambition of thousands—to be thought an eloquent and impressive speaker; for this purpose, he always used ten times as many words as were necessary

to express his meaning, and those, too, of the longest and strongest description. Another of his tormenting peculiarities was his desire of explaining everything, by which he always perplexed and mystified the simplest subject. Yet he had his good points, for he wished to see those around him happy, provided he was the dispenser of their happiness, and that they were happy precisely in the manner and degree he thought proper. In short, Lord Rossville was a sort of petty, benevolent tyrant; and any attempt to enlarge his soul or open his understanding would have been in vain. Indeed, his mind was already full, as full as it could hold, of little thoughts, little plans, little notions, little prejudices, little whims, and nothing short of regeneration could have made him otherwise. He had a code of laws, a code of proprieties, a code of delicacies all his own, and he had long languished for subjects to execute them upon. Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter were therefore no small acquisitions to his family; he looked upon them as two very fine pieces of wax, ready to receive whatever impression he chose to give them; and the humble confiding manner in which his niece had been committed to him had at once secured both to mother and daughter his favour and protection. Lady Betty's character does not possess materials to furnish so long a commentary. She was chiefly remarkable for the quantity of worsted-work she executed, which, for a person of her time of life, was considered no less extraordinary than meritorious.

She was now employed on her fifth rug; the colours were orange and blue; the pattern an orange tiger *couchant* picked out with scarlet upon an azure ground. She also read all the novels and romances which it is presumed are published for the exclusive benefit of superannuated old women and silly young ones—such as "The Enchanted Head," "The Invisible Hand," "The Miraculous Nuptials," etc. etc. etc. She was now in the midst of "Bewildered Affections; or, All is not Lost," which she was reading, unconsciously, for the third time, with unbroached delight. Lastly, she carefully watched over a fat, pampered, ill-natured lap-dog, subject to epilepsy; and asked a great many useless questions, which few people thought of answering.

These were the only members of the family who appeared, but Lord Rossville mentioned that two of his nephews were on a visit in the neighbourhood, and might be expected the following day.

"Since you are now, madam," said he, addressing Mrs. St. Clair, "become as it were incorporated in the Rossville family, it is proper and expedient that you should be made acquainted with all its members. I do not mean that acquaintance which a personal introduction conveys, but that knowledge which we acquire by a preconceived opinion, founded upon the experience of those on whose judgment and accuracy we can rely. I shall, therefore, give you such information regarding the junior members of this family as observation and opportunity have afforded me,

and which, I flatter myself, may not prove altogether unacceptable or unavailing." The Earl paused, hemmed, and proceeded. "The senior of the two juvenile members to whom you will, in all probability, be introduced in the course of a very short period, is Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Delmour of the 19th Dragoons, youngest son of the late Lord George Delmour, who was second son of James, Duke of Burlington, by the Marchioness of Effenford, widow of the deceased Charles Chaloner, Marquis of Effenford, who died at an early period, leaving one son, the present Augustus, Marquis of Effenford, married to the Lady Isabella Cardington, daughter of the Duke of Litchfield, and one daughter, the present much-admired Countess of Lymington; on the other hand, William Henry, the present Duke of Burlington, espoused the only daughter of that illustrious statesman, John, Earl of Harleigh, by whom he has issue one son, the Marquis of Haslingden, now abroad on account of the delicate and precarious state of his health. Thus it happens, and I hope I have made it sufficiently clear, that certain members of this family are at the same time united, either by consanguinity, or by collateral connection of no remote degree, with many—I might say with most—of the illustrious families in the sister kingdom.

"My sister, the Lady Augusta Delmour, widow of the late Lord George Delmour, at present resides in the metropolis with her three daughters—one of whom is, I understand, on the eve of forming a highly honourable and advantageous alliance with the eldest son

of a certain baronet of large fortune and extensive property in the southern extremity of the island; but of this it might not be altogether delicate to say more at present. Colonel Frederick Delmour, then—the subject of our more immediate consideration—is in himself a gentleman of figure, fashion, accomplishments, and of very distinguished bravery in his highly honourable profession. He has already had the honour of being twice slightly wounded in the field of battle, and in being made very honourable mention of in the despatches from the Earl of Marsham to His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief. In these respects, the dignity and untarnished honour of the noble families to which he belongs have suffered no diminution in his person; but it is to his elder brother"—and he now turned towards Miss St. Clair—"that we—that is, the Duke of Burlington and myself—look as to one who is to add still greater lustre to the coronets with which he is so intimately connected. To all the natural advantages, accomplishments, and acquirements of his brother, he unites address and abilities of the highest order, by means of which he has already acted a most distinguished part in the senate, and bids fair to become one of the first—if not *the* first, statesmen of this, or, indeed, of any age." The Earl paused, as if overcome with the prophetic visions which crowded on his mind.

"What time of night is it?" asked Lady Betty.

The Earl, recalled from his high anticipations, and reminded of the lapse of time, resumed his discourse,

but in a less lofty tone. "The junior member of this family, whom I have now to present to you, is Edward Lyndsay, Esquire of Lynnwood, in this county, only child of the late Edward Lyndsay of Lynnwood, Esquire, and my youngest sister, the deceased Lady Jane St. Clair. The late Mr. Lyndsay was descended from an ancient and highly respectable family, but, by certain ancestral imprudences, was considerably involved and embarrassed during his life,—in so much, that he was under the necessity of accepting a situation in one of our colonial settlements, whither he was accompanied by Lady Jane. Both, I lament to say, fell victims, in a short period, to the pestilential effects of the climate, leaving this young man, then an infant of three years and a-half old, to my sole protection and guardianship. How these duties were discharged it is not for me to say; only, in justice to myself, I deem it right and proper to state, that, at the expiry of the minority, the estate then was—(I say nothing of the means or management—let these speak for themselves—I simply deem it due to myself to state, that the estate was *then*)—free. *If* it is so no longer——" and the Earl bowed, and waved his hands in that significant manner which says, "I wash my hands of it." But his Lordship took a long time even to wash his hands, for he still went on—"There is, perhaps, no greater or more insuperable impediment to radical improvement in youth—and it is, I lament to say, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the age in which we live—than a disregard for the warning voice of those who have, with honour, advan-

tage, and dignity, arrived at that period of life when they are entitled to the meed of, at least, experience. Had Mr. Lyndsay followed the path which, with infinite consideration, I had marked out for him, he might now, by the instrumentality of those great and noble family connections he possesses, have been on the high road to honour, wealth, distinction, and self-approbation. As it is, he has chosen, contrary to my recommendation, to decline the highly advantageous situation offered to him in our Asiatic dominions, assigning as his sole reason, that he was satisfied with what he already had, and meant to devote himself to the management and improvement of his own estate. A young man in his situation in life, scarcely yet twenty-six years of age, highly educated, as I made it a point he should be, and possessed of an ancient family estate, by no means great, and, I much fear, not wholly unencumbered, to refuse a situation of such honour, emolument, and patronage! Mr. Lyndsay may be a *good* man; but it was my most anxious wish and endeavour to have made him more—I would have made him—had he submitted to my guidance and control—I would have made him a *great* man!"

The solemn and dignified silence which followed this was happily broken by the announcement of supper. The evening wore slowly away, for each minute seemed like a drop of lead to Miss St. Clair, who was more of an age and temperament to enjoy than to endure. At length it was ended, and she retired to her apartment with mingled feelings of pleasure and disappointment.

CHAPTER IV.

"O life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays thy hills adorning!
Cold-pausing caution's lessons scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys at th' expected warning,
To joy and play."

BURNS.

THE following morning Gertrude rose early, impatient to take an unmolested survey of what she already looked upon as her own. The suite of public rooms engaged but little of her attention; she had already settled in her own mind that these must be completely new furnished, and with this sweeping resolution she passed quickly through them, merely stopping to examine the few pictures they contained. An open door, an almost dark passage, and a turnpike stair, at length presented themselves as stimulants to her curiosity, and tempted her to diverge from the straight line she had hitherto followed. It was the original part of the building, to which a modern Gothic front had been affixed, and she soon found herself in all the inextricable maze of long narrow passages, leading only to disappointment—steps which seemed

to have been placed only, as if on purpose, to make people stumble—and little useless rooms, which looked as if they had been contrived solely for the pastime of hide-and-seek. At length she entered one she guessed to be Lord Rossville's study, and was hastily retreating, when her eye was caught by an old-fashioned glass door, opening upon a shrubbery. She tried to open it, but it was locked; the prospect from without was alluring, and she felt unwilling to turn away from it; the windows were but a little distance from the ground, and, having opened one, and smelt the violets that grew beneath, her next impulse was to spring lightly through it into the garden. As she inhaled the fresh morning air, fraught with the sweets of early summer, where "the scent comes and goes like the warbling of music," and looked on the lovely landscape as it shone in the deep calm radiance of the morning sun, her heart exulted in all the joyousness of youth and health in the brightness of creation. She had wandered to a considerable distance, when, having gained the top of an eminence, she stood to admire the effect of some cottages situated on the green shelving bank which overhung the river. "What a pretty picturesque thing a cottage is," thought she to herself; "how gracefully its smoke rises from amongst the trees, and contrasts with the clear atmosphere around. When this is mine, I will certainly have some pretty cottages built in sight of the castle, and have the good people to dance on the green sward before their doors in an evening when their work is

done. Oh, how easy it must be to be good when one has the power of doing good!"

Ignorant of herself and of the nature of the human heart, Gertrude believed that to will and to do were one and the same; as yet untaught that all vague baseless schemes of virtue, all vain romantic dreams of benevolence, are as much the cobwebs of imagination as the air-built castles of human happiness, whether of love, glory, riches, or ambition.

The beauty of the morning—the interest each object excited—the song of the birds—the smell of the opening flowers—the sound of the waters, all combined to lull her visionary mind into an Elysium of her own creating, and as she walked along, in all the ideal enjoyment of her Utopian schemes, she found herself at the door of one of those cottages whose picturesque appearance had charmed her so much at a distance. A nearer survey, however, soon satisfied her that the view owed all its charms to distance. Some coarse, lint-haired, mahogany-faced, half-naked urchins, with brown legs and black feet, were dabbling in a gutter before the door, while some bigger ones were pursuing a pig and her litter, seemingly for the sole purpose of amusement.

"What a pity those children are all so ugly!" thought Miss St. Clair; "it would have been so delightful to have had them all nicely dressed, and have taught them myself; but they are so frightful, I could have no pleasure in seeing them." However, she overcame her repugnance so far as to accost them.

"Would not you like to be made nice and clean, and have pretty new clothes?"

"Ay!" answered one of them with a broad stare, and still broader accent.

"And to go to school, and be taught to read, and write, and work?"

"Naw!" answered the whole troop with one voice, as they renewed their splashing with fresh vigour. Miss St. Clair made no further attempts in that quarter, but she entered the cottage, carefully picking her steps, and wrapping her garments close round her, to prevent their contracting any impurities. The smoke, which had figured so gracefully out of doors had a very different effect within, and she stood a few minutes on the threshold before she could summon courage to penetrate farther. At length, as her eyes got accustomed to the palpable obscure, she discovered the figure of a man, seated in a wooden chair by the fire, in a ragged coat and striped woollen nightcap. "He is ill, poor creature," thought she, and quickly advancing, she wished him good morning. Her salutation was respectfully returned, and the man, making an effort to rise, invited her to be seated with considerable courtesy.

"I am afraid you are ill," said Gertrude, declining the invitation, and looking with compassion on his lean sallow visage.

"Oo, 'deed he's very ill, my leddy," cried a voice from behind, and presently advanced a stout, blooming, broad-faced dame, clad in a scanty blue flannel

petticoat and short-gown. She was encompassed by a *girr* or hoop supporting two stoups,[1] a piece of machinery altogether peculiar to Scotland. Having disengaged herself from this involvement or convolvement, she dropt a curtsey to her guest, and then, wiping down a chair, pressed her to be seated.

"The gudeman's really extraordinar ill, my leddy," continued she, in a high key. "I'm sure I kenna what to do wi' him; it was first a sutten doon cauld, an' noo he's fa'n in till a sort o' a dwinin like, an' atweel I dinna think he'll e'er get the better o't."

"Have you any doctor to see him?" inquired Miss St. Clair.

"Oo, 'tweel he's had doctors eneugh, an' naething's been spared on him. I'm sure he's pitten as muckle doctor's stuff o' ae kind an' anither in till himsel' as might hae pushened him twenty times ower; but weel-a-wat, I think the mair he taks the waur he grows."

"Perhaps he takes too much medicine."

"'Deed I'll no say but he may, but ye ken, my leddy, what can he do?—he maun tak what the doctor sends him—the things canna be lost; but 'tweel he's very sweered to tak them whiles, tho' I'm sure muckle money they cost, an', as I tell him, they're dear morsels."

"Perhaps if he were to leave off the medicines, and try the effect of fresh air, and good milk, and soup, which I shall endeavour to procure for him——"

[1] A stoup is neither a bucket, nor a pitcher, nor a jar, nor an anything but a stoup.

"I'm sure we're muckle obliged to you, my leddy, but he need nae want for fresh air, he can get eneugh o' that ony day by gawen to the door; but there's nae gettin him to stir frae the chimley lug; and, 'deed, I canna say he wants for milk or broth either, for ane o' the young gentlemen up bye spoke to my Lord for us, and he's really no to mean for his meat if he wad tak it; as I tell him whiles, my certy, mony a ane wad be glad to hae't for the takin."

"Is there anything else, then, in which I can be of use to you?" inquired Miss St. Clair, now addressing the invalid, "is there anything you particularly wish for?"

The man held up a ragged elbow—"Gin your leddyship has an auld coat to spare," said he, in a hesitating voice.

"An auld coat!" interposed his dame; "oo, what could pit an auld coat in your head, Tam? I'm sure there's a hantel things mair needfu' than an auld coat—no that he wad be the waur o' a coat neither, for he has naething atween that puir dud on his back an' his marriage ane, and his Sabbath-day suit in the kist there."

"Pray let me know what things are most wanted for your husband's comfort," said Miss St. Clair, "and I shall make a point of sending them—a bit of carpet, for instance——" looking upon the damp clay floor.

"Wud ye like a bit carpet, Tam, the leddy asks?" roared his wife to him; then, without waiting for an answer—

"Oo, 'deed he disna ken what he wud like; an' he's ne'er been used till a carpet, an' I daur say it wud just be a disconvenience till him, noo that he canna be fashed wi' ony thing—no but what he might pit up wi' a bit carpet, I'se warran', if he had ither things that are a hantel mair needfu'."

"A more comfortable chair, then, I may surely send," said Gertrude, still persisting in her benevolent attempts.

"The leddy's for sendin' ye anither chyre, Tam," again shouted his tender helpmate; the husband nodded his assent;—"but, 'tweel, he's sutten sae lang in that ane, I doot it's no worth his while to chynge 't noo; and I dinna think he could be fashed wi' anither chyre—no but what we micht pit up wi' anither chyre or twa, if we had awthing else wiselike."

"I am sorry there is nothing I can think of that would be acceptable to you——"

"Oo, I'll no say that, my leddy," briskly interrupted the hostess; "there's a hantel things, weel-a-wat, we hae muckle need o'; for ae thing—but I maist think shame to tell't—an it's really nae faut o' mine neither, my leddy, but it's just sae happent, wi' ae thing an' anither, I hae ne'er gotten a steek o' the guidman's dead claise ready—and noo to think that he's drawin' near his end, I'm sure I canna tell the vexation it's cost me." Here the dame drew a deep sigh, and wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, then proceeded—"Sicna a discreditable like

thing to hae said, an' sic a comfort as, nae doot, it wad be to him to see awthing ready and wise-like afore he gaed out o' the world. A suit o' gude bein comfortable dead claise, Tammes," appealing to her husband, "wad set ye better than aw the braw chyres an' carpets i' the toon. No but what if ance ye had the tane ye micht pit up wi' the tither; but wad nae't be a bonny-like thing to see you set up wi' a braw carpet, and a saft chyre, an' to think ye had nae sa muckle as a wise-like windin' sheet to row ye in?"

A great deal of the pathos of this harangue was of course unintelligible to Miss St. Clair; but she comprehended the main scope of it, and, somewhat shocked at this Scotch mode of evincing conjugal affection, she put down some money and withdrew, rather surprised to find what different ideas of comfort prevailed in different countries, and a good deal disappointed in the failure of her benevolent intentions.

CHAPTER V.

"What kind of catechising call you this?"
Much Ado about Nothing.

TIME had passed unheeded, and chance, rather than design, led Miss St. Clair to retrace her steps, when, as she drew near the castle, she was met by one of the servants, who informed her that he and several others had been sent in search of her, as it was long past the breakfast hour, and the family had been some time assembled. Ashamed of her own thoughtlessness, she quickened her steps, and, desiring the servant to show the way to the breakfast-room, without waiting to adjust her dress, she hastily entered, eager to apologise for her transgression. But the dread solemnity that sat on Lord Rossville's brow made her falter in her purpose. With the tea-pot in one hand, with the other he made an awful wave for her to be seated. Lady Betty was busy mixing a mess of hot rolls, cream, and sugar for her epileptic lap-dog. An impending storm sat on Mrs. St. Clair's face, but veiled under an appearance of calm dignified displeasure. Gertrude felt as if denounced by the whole party—she knew not for what, unless for having been twenty minutes too late for breakfast, and, in some trepidation, she

began to apologise for her absence. Lord Rossville gave several deep sepulchral hems, then, as if he had been passing sentence upon a criminal, said,—

"I am not averse to postpone the discussion of this delicate and painful investigation, Miss St. Clair, until you shall have had the benefit of refreshment."

Gertrude was confounded—"My Lord!" exclaimed she, in amazement, "I am very sorry if anything has occurred"—and she looked round for an explanation.

Lord Rossville hemmed—looked still more appalling, and then spoke as follows:—

"You are doubtless aware, Miss St. Clair, that, in all countries where civilisation and refinement have made any considerable progress, female delicacy and propriety are—are ever held in the highest estimation and esteem."

His Lordship paused; and as no contradiction was offered to this his proem, he proceeded—

"But you must, or certainly *ought*, to be likewise aware, that it is not merely these virtues themselves which must be carefully implanted and vigilantly watched over, in the young and tender female—for even the possession of the virtues themselves are not a sufficient shield for the female character. It was a maxim of Julius Cæsar's, unquestionably the greatest conqueror that ever lived, that his wife must not only be spotless in herself, but that she must not even be suspected by others; a maxim that, in my opinion, deserves to be engraven in letters of gold, and certainly

cannot be too early, or too deeply, imprinted on the young and tender female breast."

His Lordship had gained a climax, and he stopped, overpowered with his own eloquence. Mrs. St. Clair made a movement expressive of the deepest attention, and most profound admiration.

"Such being my sentiments—sentiments in which I am borne out by the testimony of one of the greatest men who ever lived—it is not surprising that I should feel, and feel deeply too, the glaring indiscretion you have, I grieve to say, already committed, since your entrance within these walls."

Then after another solemn pause, during which Miss St. Clair sat in speechless amazement, he resumed with more than senatorial dignity.

"I wish to be correctly informed at what hour you quitted your apartment this morning, Miss St. Clair?"

"Indeed, my Lord, I cannot tell," answered Gertrude, with perfect naïveté. "I had forgot to wind up my watch, and I did not hear any clock strike; but, from the appearance of the morning, I am sure it was early."

"And what, may I ask, was the mode or manner, Miss St. Clair, by which you thought proper to quit my house at so untimely and unusual an hour?" demanded the Earl, in a voice of repressed emotion.

Gertrude blushed. "I am afraid I was guilty of a transgression, my Lord, for which I ask your pardon; but, allured by the fineness of the morning, and the beauty of the scenery, I was desirous of getting out to

enjoy them, and having in vain tried to make my way through a door, I was tempted to escape by a window."

Miss St. Clair spoke with so much simplicity and gentleness, and there was so much sweetness and even melody in her voice and accent, that any other than Lord Rossville would have wished her offence had been greater, that her apology might have been longer. Not so his Lordship, who possessed neither taste nor ear, and was alive to no charm but what he called propriety. At the conclusion of his niece's acknowledgment, the Earl struck his forehead, and took two or three turns up and down the room, then suddenly stopping—

"Are you at all aware, Miss St. Clair, of the glaring—the—I must say—gross impropriety of such a step in itself—of the still more gross construction that will be put upon it by the world? The simple fact has only to be told, and one inference, and but *one*, will be drawn. You have quitted the apartment assigned to you under my roof at a nameless, untimely, consequently unbefitting hour; and you rashly, wantonly, and improperly precipitate yourself from a window—and what window? why, the window of my private sitting-room! A young female is seen issuing from the window of my study at a nameless hour in the morning—the tale circulates—and where, I ask, am I?"

"Where was you?" asked Lady Betty.

Mrs. St. Clair put her handkerchief to her face.

"I am very sorry, my Lord, that I should have done anything to displease you—if I have done wrong——"

"*If* you have done wrong! Good heavens! is it thus you view the matter, Miss St. Clair? What *I* think wrong! Who that has proper feelings of delicacy and propriety—who that has a due regard for character and reputation, but must view the matter precisely as I do? Such a step—and at such an hour!"

And his Lordship resumed his troubled walk.

Unacquainted with her uncle's character, and ignorant of the manners and customs of the country, Gertrude was led to believe she had committed a much more serious offence than she had been aware of, and she was at length wrought up to that degree of distress which the Earl deemed necessary to mark her contrition. Softened at witnessing the effect of his power, which he imputed to the fine style of his language, he now took his niece's hand, and addressed her in what he intended for a more consolatory strain.

"I have considered it my duty—a painful one, doubtless, but, nevertheless, my duty—to point out to you the impropriety you have—I hope and believe, —inadvertently committed. As a member of my family, and one for whose actions the world will naturally consider me responsible, it is necessary that I should henceforth take upon myself the entire regulation of your future manners and conduct in life. You, Madam"—to Mrs. St. Clair—"have delegated to me the authority of a parent, and I should

ill merit so important a trust were I to shrink from the discharge of the functions of the parental office."

Miss St. Clair's blood ran cold at the thoughts of being subjected to such thraldom.

"But before dismissing this subject—I trust for ever—let me here state to you my sentiments with regard to young ladies walking before breakfast—a practice of which, I must confess, I have always disapproved. I am aware it is a practice that has the sanction of many highly respectable authorities who have written on the subject of female ethics; but, I own, I cannot approve of young ladies of rank and family leaving their apartments, at the same hour with chamber-maids and dairy-maids, and walking out unattended at an hour when only the lower orders of the people are abroad. Walking before breakfast, then, I must consider as a most rude, masculine habit—as the Right Honourable Edmund Burke observes, 'An air of robustness and strength is highly prejudicial to beauty' (that is, as I apprehend, female beauty), 'while an appearance of fragility is no less essential to it;'—and certainly nothing, in my opinion, can be more unbecoming, more unfeminine, than to behold a young lady seat herself at the breakfast-table with the complexion of a dairy-maid and the appetite of a ploughman. At the same time, I am an advocate for early rising, as there are, doubtless, many ways in which young ladies may spend their mornings, without rambling abroad; and you will find, by looking in your dressing-room, that I have made ample

provision for your instruction, and amusement, and delight. Let morning walks, therefore, from henceforth have an end." And he pressed his niece's hand with that air of pompous forgiveness so revolting from one human being to another. Luckily, his Lordship was here summoned away; but ere he left the room he signified his intention of returning in an hour to show the ladies what was most worthy of observation in the castle and demesnes.

Absurd as this scene may appear, few will deny the undue importance which many people attach to the trifles of life, and how often molehills are magnified into mountains by those with whom trifles are indeed "the sum of human things."

CHAPTER VI.

"By'r lakin, I can go no further, sir;
My old bones ache: here's a maze trod indeed
Through forth-rights and meanders! by your patience,
I needs must rest me."
The Tempest.

"True as the dial to the sun,
Even though it be not shined upon."

LORD ROSSVILLE returned at the hour appointed to do the honours of his castle. But, as most of my readers have doubtless experienced the misery of being shown a house where there was nothing to be seen, and can tell "how hard it is to climb" from the second sunk story to the uppermost garrets, I shall not be so unmerciful as to drag them up stairs and down stairs to my Lady's chamber, and into all the chambers except his Lordship's own, which he was too decorous to exhibit. Neither shall I insist upon their hearing everything explained and set forth, even to the Dutch tiles of the dairy, the hot and cold pipes of the washing-house, the new invented ovens, the admirably-constructed larder, the inimitable baths, with all the wonder-working, steam-going apparatus of the kitchen. Here Mrs. St. Clair acquitted herself to admiration, for to see judiciously

requires no small skill in the seer, and there are few who see things precisely as they ought to be seen. Many see too much—many too little. Some see only to find fault—some only to admire; some are, or pretend to be, already acquainted with everything they are shown; some are profoundly ignorant, consequently cannot properly appreciate the inventions or improvements exhibited. Some are too inquisitive—some too indifferent; but it is as impossible to describe the vast variety of seers as of mosses, neither is it easy to point out the innumerable rocks on which a seer may strike. A treatise, illustrated by a few memorable examples or awful warnings, might possibly be of some use to the unskilful beholder. But, as in most other arts and sciences, much must depend upon natural genius. Mrs. St. Clair was so happily endowed that she was enabled to see everything as it was intended to be seen, and to bestow her admiration in the exact proportion in which she perceived it was required, through all the intermediate degrees, from ecstatic rapture down to emphatic approval. With Miss St. Clair it was far otherwise; she had no taste for poking into pantries, and chimneys, and cellars, or of hearing any of the inelegant minutiæ of life detailed. It seemed like breaking all the enchantments of existence to be thus made to view the complicated machinery by which life, artificial life, was sustained; and she rejoiced when the survey was ended, and it was proposed after luncheon to take a drive through the grounds. Gertrude flattered

herself that here she would at least enjoy the repose of inactivity, and be suffered to see as much as could be seen, from a carriage window, of the beauties of nature. But Lord Rossville's mind was never in a quiescent state in any situation; there was always something to be done or to be seen: the windows were to be either let down or drawn up; the blinds to be drawn up or pulled down; there was something that ought to be seen, but could not be seen; or there was something seen that ought not to have been seen; thus his mind was not only its own plague, but the plague of all who had the misfortune to bear him company.

In vain were creation's charms spread before his eyes. There is a mental blindness, darker than that which shrouds the visual orb, and nature's works were to Lord Rossville a universal blank, or rather they were a sort of account-book, in which were registered all his own petty doings. It was here he had drained—there he had embanked; here he had planted—there he had cut down; here he had built a bridge—there he had made a road; here he had levelled—there he had raised, etc. etc. etc. To all that his own head had planned he was feelingly alive; but for the "dread magnificence of Heaven," he had neither eye, ear, nor soul, and must, therefore, be forgiven if insensible to its influence. Mrs. St Clair was not much more highly gifted in that respect, but she could speak, if she could not feel, and she expatiated and admired till Lord Rossville thought her,

without exception, the cleverest woman he had ever met with.

"Since you are so great an enthusiast in the beauties of nature, my dear madam," said he, addressing his sister-in-law, "we shall extend our drive a little farther than I had purposed, that I may have the pleasure of showing you, at a single *coup d'œil*, the whole extent of the Rossville possessions in this county, while, at the same time, you will embrace some other objects, in which I am not wholly unconcerned. Benjamin"—to the servant—"to Pinnacle Hill," and to Pinnacle Hill the horses' heads were turned. "Pinnacle Hill," continued the Earl, "is a very celebrated spot; it is a purchase I made from Lord Fairacre some years ago; it is much resorted to by strangers, as commanding, with few exceptions, one of the finest views in Scotland."

Mrs. St. Clair hated fine views, and she tried to get off by pretending scruples about encroaching so much on his Lordship's time, goodness, and so forth —but all in vain; to Pinnacle Hill they were driven, and, after being dragged up as far as horses could go, they were (as, indeed, the name implied) obliged to alight and ascend on foot. With considerable toil they reached the top, and scarcely were they there when the wind, having changed to the east, its never-failing accompaniment, a raw mist, began to gather all round. But Lord Rossville was insensible even to an east wind—his bodily sensations being quite as obtuse as his mental ones; and, having got to the top

of the Pinnacle, he faced him round, and, in the very teeth of the enemy, began to point out what was and what was *not* to be seen.

"Here you have a very commanding view, or would have had, if the atmosphere had been somewhat clearer; as it is, I can enable you distinctly to trace out the boundary line of the Rossville estate. Observe the course of the river in the direction of my cane—you see it plainly here—there it disappears amongst the Millbank woods—now it takes a turn, and you have it again to your left—you follow me?"

"Perfectly, my Lord," replied Mrs. St. Clair, although she saw nothing but a wreath of mist.

"Undoubtedly, that must be the river we see," said his Lordship, doubtingly; "but, at the same time, we never can rely with perfect security upon the watery element; it has many prototypes, which are not easily detected at a distance—a bleachfield, for instance, has not unfrequently been mistaken for a piece of water; and we read of a very singular deception produced upon sand in the eastern countries, and termed the *mirage*."

"Water is, indeed, a deceitful element," said Mrs. St. Clair, hoping, by this affirmative, to get to the lee-side of the discussion.

"On the other hand, it is a most useful and invaluable element; without water, where would be our navigation—our commerce—our knowledge—our arts?—in one word, water may be termed the bulwark of Britain."

"It may indeed," said Mrs. St. Clair, her teeth chattering as she spoke; "to water we owe our existence as a nation, our liberties, civil and religious," and she retreated a few steps, on the faith of having settled the matter.

"Pardon me there, my dear madam," said the Earl, retaining his original footing; "that is, perhaps, going a little too far; strictly speaking, we cannot with propriety be said to owe our existence to water, since, had we not been an island, a highly-favoured island, we should certainly have formed part of the vast continent of Europe; and with regard to our liberties, the Magna Charta, that boast of Britain, was unquestionably procured, and, I trust, will ever be maintained, on *terra firma.*"

Mrs. St. Clair could almost have given up the game at this point—to stand on the very pinnacle of a pinnacle, in the face of an east wind, and be talked to about bulwarks and Magna Chartas! it was too much.

"How very cold you look, mamma," said Miss St. Clair, compassionating her mother's feelings.

"Cold!" repeated Lord Rossville, in a tone of surprise and displeasure; "impossible—cold in the month of May! the day would be too hot, were it not for this cooling breeze."

This was worse and worse. Mrs. St. Clair groaned internally, as she thought, "How will it be possible to drag out existence with a man who calls a piercing east wind a cooling breeze!"

Lord Rossville raised his cane, and resumed his observations at great length upon the ravages committed by the river on his friend and neighbour Boghall's property. Mrs. St. Clair wished the Boghall acres in the bottom of the Red Sea, though even from thence Lord Rossville might, perhaps, have fished them up, as a thorough-bred tormentor, like a first-rate magician, can call spirits, even from the vasty deep, to torment his victims.

"Here," continued the Earl, taking his sister-in-law by the hand, and leading her to the utmost verge of all she hated, a bleak exposed promontory; "here we command a no less charming prospect in a different style:—observe that range of hills."

"Superb!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, with an aguish shudder.

"Why, yes—the hills themselves are very well—but do you observe nothing, my dear madam, that relieves the eye from what a friend of mine justly calls a boundless continuity of shade?"

Mrs. St. Clair almost cracked her eyeballs straining in the direction pointed out, but, like sister Anne, could see nothing to the purpose.

"I suspect you are looking rather too high; nearer the base, and allow your eye to run along by the point of my cane—there, you must have got it now."

There are, perhaps, few everyday situations more tormenting to a delicate mind than that of being called upon to see what you cannot see; you must either disappoint the views of the view-pointer, or you

must sacrifice your conscience (as it is much to be feared too many do), by pretending that you have at last hit the mark, whether it be a puff of smoke, indicative of a town, a white cloud of the ocean, or a black speck of an island.

"Ah! I think I discover something now," cried Mrs. St. Clair, quite at a loss to guess whether the white mote in question was a church steeple, or a ship's mast, or any other wonderful object of the same nature, which generous, long-sighted people will always make a point of sharing with their less gifted friends.

"And you think the effect good?"

"Admirable—inimitable!"

"Why, the situation was my own choice; there was a committee appointed to make choice of the most favourable site, and they fortunately fell in with my views on the subject, and, indeed, paid me the compliment of consulting my feelings on the occasion: —a public monument, I conceive, ought, undoubtedly, to be placed in a conspicuous and elevated situation; but more especially when that situation happens to be in the very grounds of not only the original proposer and principal heritor in the county, but likewise the personal friend of the illustrious dead to whom this tribute is decreed—for I am proud to say our renowned patriot, the great Lord Pensionwell, was (with the excellent Lord Dunderhead) the associate of my youthful years—the friend of my maturer age."

"Happy the country," said Mrs. St. Clair, now

driven almost to frenzy, "whose nobles are thus gifted with the power of reflecting kindred excellence, and perpetuating national virtue on the broad basis of private friendship."

Mrs. St. Clair knew she was talking nonsense, but she also knew who she was talking to, and was sure it would pass. Lord Rossville, to be sure, was a little puzzled, but he saw it was meant as a compliment, and contained a fine sounding sentiment, and it was therefore well received. Fortunately, the rain now began to fall, and every object being completely shrouded in mist, his Lordship was obliged to give in; but he comforted himself, and thought he comforted his companions, by promising to return, when the weather was more propitious, to repeat and complete their enjoyment.

CHAPTER VII.

"Most musical, most melancholy!"

MILTON.

DINNER passed heavily, for, although its arrangements were faultless, there was a want of that ease which is the essence of good cheer. The evening entertainment was still worse, for Lord Rossville piqued himself upon his musical talents, and Miss St. Clair, whose taste and execution were both of a superior order, was doomed to the tortures of his Lordship's accompaniment. His false chords—his overstrained cadences—his palsied shakes—his tones, half and whole, grated upon her ear, and she felt that music and melody were sometimes very different things. He affected to despise all music except that of the great composers, and chose for the subject of his execution Beethoven's "Synfonia Pastorale." "Here," said he, as he placed it before his niece and himself, "observe the great point is to have your mind duly impressed with the ideas these grand and characteristic movements are designed to express. Here we have, in the first place, 'The Prospect;'—we must, of course, infer that it is a fine or pleasing prospect, such, for example, as we viewed to-day, that the great composer intended to

represent; let your movements, therefore, be graceful and aërial—light and shade, hill and dale, wood and water; then follows 'The Rivulet,'—that, I need scarcely inform you, must be expressed by a gentle, murmuring, liquid, trickling measure. Next we have the 'Village Dance,' brisk, gay, and exhilarating—rustic, but not vulgar. As a powerful contrast to these simple scenes now bursts upon us 'The Storm,' awful, sublime, overpowering as the conflict of the element—howling winds, descending torrents, hail, thunder, lightning, all must be conveyed here, or the mighty master's aim is rendered abortive. To soothe the mind after this awful explosion of genius we wind up the whole with the 'Shepherd's Song,' breathing the soft accents of peace and pastoral innocence—and now *da capo.*"

Miss St. Clair might well shudder at the prospect before her, and her tortures were exquisite when she found her ear, taste, feeling, science, all placed under the despotic sway of his Lordship's bow and foot; but, at length, her sufferings were ended by the sound of supper. "Ha!" exclaimed he, starting up, "it seems we take no note of time here." This was a favourite *jeu de mot* of the Earl's, and, indeed, it was suspected that he sometimes allowed himself to be surprised for the pleasure of repeating it.

Supper was nearly over, when the trampling of horses, barking of dogs, ringing of bells, and all the usual clamour which attends the arrival of a person of distinction, caused a sensation in the company. Lady

Betty asked what that was, while she took her favourite on her lap, and covered it with her pocket-handkerchief, from beneath which, however, issued ever and anon, a low asthmatic growl.

"It is Colonel Delmour, my Lady," answered the pompous *maître d'hotel*, who had despatched a messenger to inquire.

"It is an extraordinary and somewhat improper time of night, I think——"

But his Lordship's remarks were stopped by the entrance of the party in question. Merely touching his uncle's hand as he passed him, and scarcely noticing Lady Betty, Colonel Delmour advanced to Mrs. and Miss St. Clair, and paid his compliments to them with all the graceful, high-bred ease of a man of fashion; then calling for a chair, he seated himself by his cousin, seemingly regardless of one having been placed by Lord Rossville's orders on the other side of the table. Colonel Delmour was strikingly handsome, both in face and form, and he possessed that high hereditary air of fashion and freedom which bore the impress of nobility and distinction. There might, perhaps, be something of *hauteur* in his lofty bearing; but it was so qualified by the sportive gaiety of his manners, that it seemed nothing more than that elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority, to which, even without arrogance, he could not be insensible. He talked much, and well; and in that general way which allowed every one to take a part in the conversation, without suffering any one, not even the

Earl, to monopolise it. Altogether, his presence was like sunshine upon frost-work, and an air of ease and gaiety succeeded to the dulness and constraint which had hitherto prevailed. Lady Betty had three times asked, "What brought you here at this time of night?" before Colonel Delmour answered. At last, he said—

"Two very powerful motives, though scarcely fit to be named together—the first was my eagerness to do homage here," bowing gracefully to Miss St. Clair; "the other was to avoid the honour of driving Miss Pratt."

"I thought Mr. Lyndsay was to have returned with you," said the Earl.

"I offered him a seat in my curricle, which he wanted to transfer to Miss Pratt, but I could not possibly agree to that arrangement, so he remains like a *preux chevalier* to escort her in a hackney-chaise, and also, I believe, to attend a Bible meeting, or a charity sermon, or something of that sort. It is more, I suspect, as a paymaster than a protector that his services are required, as he discovered it would cost her, I can't tell how many shillings and sixpences; and though I would willingly have paid her expenses, yet, really, to endure her company for a nine-mile *tête-à-tête* was more than my philosophy dreamt of."

Much depends on the manner in which things are said as to the impression they convey to the unreflecting mind. Colonel Delmour's voice and accent were uncommonly pleasing, and he had an air of gay good-humour that gave to his words rather the semblance

of airy levity than of selfishness or ill-nature. Even when he carelessly sketched on the table-cloth a caricature of Mr. Lyndsay with a large Bible under his arm, handing Miss Pratt, with a huge bandbox in hers, into a hackney-chaise, Gertrude could not resist a smile at their expense.

"Miss Pratt coming here to-morrow!" exclaimed the Earl, in a tone expressive of anything but pleasure; "that is somewhat an unexpected——" and his Lordship made an effort as if to bolt some word too hard for utterance. Then addressing Mrs. St. Clair, though with a very disturbed look, "As, in all probability, madam, that lady's visit is designed out of compliment to you and your daughter, it is necessary, previous to her arrival, that you should be aware of the degree of relationship subsisting between Miss Pratt and the members of this family."

Lord Rossville's air, looks, manner, hems, all portended a story; it was but too evident that breath was collecting and reminiscences arranging for the purpose, and the pause that ensued was prophetic, not, alas! of its end, but of its beginning. But Colonel Delmour seemed quite aware of the danger that was impending, and just as his uncle had opened his mouth with "Miss Pratt's great-grandfather——" he interposed.

"I beg pardon, but I cannot think of devolving the task of being Miss Pratt's chronicle upon you; as I was guilty of introducing her to the company, mine be the punishment of becoming her biographer." Then

with a rapidity which left the Earl with his mouth open, and Miss Pratt's great-grandfather still vibrating on his tongue, he went on—

"Miss Pratt, then, by means of great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers (who, *par parenthèse*, may commonly be classed under the head of great bores), is, somehow or other, cousin to all families of distinction, in general, throughout Scotland, but to this one, from its local advantages, in particular. I cannot pretend to show forth the various modifications of which cousinship is susceptible, first, second, and third degrees, as far as numbers and degrees can go. And, indeed, I have already committed a great error in my outset by having introduced Miss Pratt by herself Miss Pratt, when I ought to have presented her as Miss Pratt and Anthony Whyte. In fact, as Whittington without his cat would be nobody in the nursery, so neither would Miss Pratt be recognised in the world without Anthony Whyte. Not that there exists the same reciprocal attachment, or unity of fortune, between the aunt and the nephew which distinguished the master and his cat; for Anthony Whyte is rich, and Miss Pratt is poor;—Anthony Whyte lives in a castle, Miss Pratt in a cottage;—Anthony Whyte has horses and hounds, Miss Pratt has clogs and pattens. There is something so uninteresting, if not unpromising, in the name that"—addressing himself to Miss St. Clair—"you, at present, will scarcely care whether it belongs to a man or a cat, and will be ready to exclaim, 'What's in a name?'

but do not expect long to enjoy this happy state of indifference—by dint of hearing it repeated day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute, upon every possible and impossible occasion, it will at length take such hold of your imagination, that you will see the mystic letters which compose the name of Anthony Whyte wherever you turn your eyes—you will be ready to 'hollow out his name to the reverberate rocks, and teach the babbling gossips of the air to cry out'—Anthony Whyte!"

"What's all that nonsense!" asked Lady Betty.

"I have been rather prosy upon Miss Pratt and her adjunct—that's all," answered Colonel Delmour, slightly; "and must have something to put away the sound of Anthony Whyte"—and he hummed a few notes—"Do, Miss St. Clair, join me in expelling those hideous names I have invoked for your gratification—you sing, I am sure."

But Gertrude was afraid to comply, for no one seconded the request. Lord Rossville, indeed, looked evidently much displeased; but it was no less manifest that his nephew neither thought nor cared for anybody's feelings but such as he was solicitous to please; and, before the party broke up, he had contrived to make a very favourable impression on the only person present whose favour he was anxious to obtain.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Her tongue runs round like a wheel, one spoke after another; there is no end of it. You would wonder at her matter to hear her talk, and would admire her talk when you hear her matter. All the wonder is, whilst she speaks only thrums, how she makes so many different ends hang together."

RICHARD FLECKNO, 1658.

MANY visitors arrived the two following days from various quarters, though all from similar motives, viz. to see the young heiress and her plebeian mother. But amongst all the varieties of life, how few can even serve "to point a moral or adorn a tale."

The most distinguished of those individuals were Lady Millbank and her daughters, who drove up in all the bustle and parade of a barouche and four, splendidly emblazoned, with drivers and riders in the full pomp of blazing liveries, and, in short, the usual éclat of an equipage which at once denotes wealth and grandeur. The ladies were in the same style with their outward bearings,—tall, showy, dashing personages, with scornful looks and supercilious manners. They surveyed Miss St. Clair from head to foot with a bold stare; and, after making some trifling remarks to her, turned their whole artillery against Colonel Delmour, who received their addresses with a sort of

careless familiarity, very different from the refined attentions he displayed towards his cousin.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed one of the ladies, who had stationed herself at a window, "do look at this, Colonel Delmour!"

And at the piercing exclamation the whole party hastened to ascertain the cause. The phenomena appeared to be a hackney-chaise of the meanest description, which was displacing the splendid barouche, to the manifest mirth of the insolent menials who stood lounging at the door.

"Who can that be, I wonder?" asked Lady Betty.

Mrs. St. Clair turned pale with terror lest it should be any of her *bourgeois* relations forcing their way.

"I conclude it must be our cousin Miss Pratt," said the Earl, in some agitation, to Lady Millbank; and, while he spoke, a female head and hand were to be seen shaking and waving to the driver with eager gesticulation.

"And Mr. Lyndsay, I vow!" exclaimed Miss Jemima Mildmay, throwing herself into a theatrical attitude of astonishment.

The hack-chaise, with its stiff, rusty horses, had now got close to the door, and the broken, jingling steps being lowered, out stepped a young man, who was immediately saluted with shouts of laughter from the party at the window. He looked up and smiled, but seemed nowise disconcerted; as he stood patiently waiting for his companion to emerge.

"I hope they are to perform quarantine," said Colonel Delmour.

"I vote for their being sent to Coventry," said Miss Augusta.

"I prepare to stand upon the defensive," said Miss Maria, as she seized a smelling-bottle from off the table.

At length Miss Pratt appeared, shaking the straw from her feet, and having alighted, it was expected that her next movement would be to enter the house; but they knew little of Miss Pratt who thought all was done when she had reached her destination. Much yet remained to be done, which she would not trust either to her companion or the servants. She had, in the first place, to speak in a very sharp manner to the driver, on the condition of his chaise and horses, and to throw out hints of having him severely punished, inasmuch as one of his windows would not let down, and she had almost sprained her wrist in attempting it—and another would not pull up, though the wind was going through her head like a spear; besides having taken two hours and a quarter to bring them nine miles, and her watch was held up in a triumphant manner in proof of her assertion. She next made it a point to see with her own eyes every article pertaining to her (and they were not a few) taken out of the chaise, and to give with her own voice innumerable directions as to the carrying, stowing, and placing of her bags, boxes, and bundles. All these matters being settled, Miss Pratt then accepted the arm of her com-

panion, and was now fairly on her way to the drawing-room. But people who make use of their eyes have often much to see even between two doors, and in her progress from the hall door to the drawing-room door Miss Pratt met with much to attract her attention. True, all the objects were perfectly familiar to her, but a real *looker*, like a great genius, is never at a loss for subject; things are either better or worse since they saw them last; or if the things themselves should happen to be the same, they have seen other things either better or worse, and can, therefore, either improve or disprove them. Miss Pratt's head, then, turned from side to side a thousand times as she went along, and a thousand observations and criticisms about stair-carpets, patent lamps, hall chairs, slab tables, etc. etc. etc., passed through her crowded brain. At length Miss Pratt and Mr. Lyndsay were announced, and thereupon entered Miss Pratt in a quick, paddling manner, as if in all haste to greet her friends.

"How do you do, my Lord? no bilious attacks, I hope, of late!—Lady Betty, as stout as ever I see; and my old friend Flora as fat as a collared eel.—Lady Millbank, I'm perfectly ashamed to see you in any house but your own; but everything must give way to the first visit, you know, especially amongst kinsfolk," taking Mrs. St. Clair by the hand, without waiting for the ceremony of an introduction.

While this, and much more in the same strain, was passing with Miss Pratt at one end of the room, Mr. Lyndsay had joined the younger part of the company

at the other, and been introduced by Colonel Delmour to Miss St. Clair. There was nothing so striking in his appearance as to arrest the careless eye, or call forth instant admiration; yet his figure, though not much above the middle size, was elegant, his head and features were finely formed, and altogether he had that sort of classical *tournure*, which, although not conspicuous, is uncommon, and that air of calm repose which indicates a mind of an elevated cast. Still, seen beside Colonel Delmour, Mr. Lyndsay might have been overlooked. He had nothing of that brilliancy of address which distinguished his cousin; but he had what is still more rare, that perfect simplicity of manner which borrows nothing from imitation; and, as some one has well remarked, few peculiarities are more striking than a total absence of all affectation. Scarcely allowing time for the introduction, Miss Millbank began in a tone intended to be very sympathetic.

"How dreadfully you must have been bored to-day with *la pauvre* Pratt! Good heavens! how could you inflict such a penance upon yourself? Did you not find her most shockingly annoying and dreadfully tiresome?"

"Annoying and tiresome to a certain degree, as everybody must be who asks idle questions," answered Mr. Lyndsay, with a smile, which, though very sweet, was not without a meaning.

The rebuff, if it was intended for such, was however lost upon his fair assailant.

"Then, good heavens! how *could* you bore yourself with her?"

"She was my mother's friend and relation," replied he, calmly.

"Of all descriptions of entail, that of friends would be the most severe," said Colonel Delmour.

"O heavens! what a shocking idea!" exclaimed the three Miss Millbanks, in a breath.

"What's the shocking idea, my dears!" demanded Miss Pratt, as she pattered into the midst of the group. "I'm sure there's no shocking realities here, for I never saw a prettier circle," darting her eyes all round, while she familiarly patted Miss St. Clair, and drawing her arm within hers, as she stood by the window, seemed resolved to appropriate her entirely to herself. Gertrude's attention was no less excited by Miss Pratt, who had to her all the charms of novelty, for though there are many Miss Pratts in the world it had never been her fortune to meet with one till now.

Miss Pratt then appeared to her to be a person from whom nothing could be hid. Her eyes were not by any means fine eyes—they were not reflecting eyes; they were not soft eyes; they were not sparkling eyes; they were not melting eyes; they were not penetrating eyes; neither were they restless eyes, nor rolling eyes, nor squinting eyes, nor prominent eyes—but they were active, brisk, busy, vigilant, immovable eyes, that looked as if they could not be surprised by anything—not even by sleep. They never

looked angry, or joyous, or perturbed, or melancholy, or heavy; but morning, noon, and night they shone the same, and conveyed the same impression to the beholder, viz. that they were eyes that had a look—not like the look of Sterne's monk, beyond this world—but a look into all things on the face of this world. Her other features had nothing remarkable in them, but the ears might evidently be classed under the same head with the eyes; they were something resembling rabbits'—long, prominent, restless, vibrating ears, for ever listening, and never shut by the powers of thought. Her voice had the tone and inflections of one accustomed to make frequent sharp interrogatories. She had rather a neat, compact figure, and the *tout ensemble* of her person and dress was that of smartness. Such, though not quite so strongly defined, was the sort of impression Miss Pratt generally made upon the beholder. Having darted two or three of her sharpest glances at Miss St. Clair—

"Do you know, I'm really puzzled, my dear, to make out who it is you are so like—for you're neither a Rossville nor a Black; and by-the-bye, have you seen your uncle, Mr. Alexander Black, yet? What a fine family he has got. I heard you were quite smitten with Miss Lilly Black at the Circuit ball t'other night, Colonel Delmour. But you're not so ill to please as Anthony Whyte. That was really a good thing Lord Punmedown said to him that night: Looking at the two Miss Blacks, says he to Anthony, with a shake of his head—'Ah, Anthony,' says he,

'I'm afraid two Blacks will never make a White!' ha! ha! ha! Lord Rossville, did you hear that? At the Circuit ball Lord Punmedown said to Anthony Whyte, pointing to the two Miss Blacks—'I fear,' says he, 'two Blacks will never make a White.' 'No, my Lord,' says Anthony, 'for you know there's no turning a Blackamoor white!' ha! ha! ha! 'A very *fair* answer,' says my Lord. Lady Millbank, did you hear of Lord Punmedown's attack upon Mr. Whyte at the ball—the two Miss Blacks——"

"I black-ball a repetition of that *bon mot*," said Colonel Delmour.

"You will really be taken for a magpie if you are so black and white," said Miss Millbank.

"'Pon my word, that's not at all amiss—I must let Anthony Whyte hear that. But, bless me, Lady Millbank, you're not going away already?—won't you stay and take some luncheon?—I can answer for the soups here. I really think, my Lord, you rival the Whyte Hall soups." But disregarding Miss Pratt's pressing invitation, Lady Millbank and her train took leave, and scarcely were they gone when luncheon was announced.

"Come, my dear," resumed the tormentor, holding Gertrude's arm within hers, "let you and I keep together—I want to get better acquainted with you—but I wish I could find a likeness for you"—looking round upon the family portraits as they entered the eating-room.

"They must look higher who would find a similitude for Miss St. Clair," said Colonel Delmour.

Miss Pratt glanced at the painted ceiling representing a band of very fat, full-blown rosy Hours. "Ah ha! do you hear that, my Lord? Colonel Delmour says there's nothing on earth to compare to Miss St. Clair, and that we must look for her likeness in the regions above. Well, goddess or not, let me recommend a bit of this nice cold lamb to you—very sweet and tender it is—and I assure you I'm one of those who think a leg of lamb looks as well on a table as in a meadow:"—then dropping her knife and fork with a start of joy—"Bless me, what was I thinking of?—that was really very well said of you, Colonel—but I've got it now—a most wonderful resemblance! See who'll be the next to find it out?"

All present looked at each other, and then at the pictures.

Lord Rossville, who had been vainly watching for an opening, now took advantage of it, and with one of his long-suppressed sonorous hems, bespoke him as follows:—

"Although I have not given much of my time or attention to the study of physiognomy, as I do not conceive it is one likely to be productive of beneficial results to society; yet I do not hesitate to admit the reality of those analogies of feature which may be, and undoubtedly are, distinctly traced through successive generations—the family mouth, for example," pointing to a long-chinned, pinky-eyed female, with a pursed-up mouth hanging aloft, "as portrayed in that most exemplary woman, the Lady Janet St. Clair, has its

prototype in that of my niece," turning to Gertrude; "while, in the more manly-formed nose of Robert, first Earl of Rossville, an accurate physiognomist might discern the root, as it were——"

"My dear Lord Rossville!" exclaimed Miss Pratt, throwing herself back in her chair, "I hope you're not going to say Miss St. Clair has the nose of Red Robby, as he was called—root, indeed!—a pretty compliment! If it was a root, it must have been a beetroot. As Anthony Whyte says, it's a nose like the handle of a pump-well; and as for Lady Janet's mouth, he says it's neither more nor less than a slit in a poor's-box."

"Mr. Anthony Whyte takes most improper liberties with the family of St. Clair if he presumes to make use of such unwarrantable, such unjustifiable—I may add, such ungentlemanly—expressions towards any of its members," said Lord Rossville, speaking faster in the heat of his indignation; "and it is mortifying to reflect that any one allied to this family should ever have so far forgot what was due to it as to form such coarse, and vulgar, and derogatory comparisons."

"One of them is rather a flattering comparison," said Mr. Lyndsay; "I'm afraid there are few mouths can be represented as emblems of charity."

"Very well said, Mr. Edward," said Miss Pratt nowise disconcerted at the *downset* she had received. "Shall I send you this nice rib in return?—Lord Rossville, let me recommend the rhubarb tart to you. Miss Diana, my dear—I beg your pardon, Miss St.

Clair, but I'll really never be able to call you anything but Diana—for such a likeness! What have you all been thinking of, not to have found out that Miss St. Clair is the very picture of the Diana in the Yellow Turret?"

Lord Rossville, in a tone of surprise and displeasure, repeated,—

"The Diana in the Yellow Turret! impossible!"

"Impossible or not, I can assure you it's the fact. Mrs. St. Clair, have you seen the Diana?—come with me, and I'll show it you—come, my dear, and see yourself as a goddess—come away—seeing's believing, my Lord." And she jumped up, almost choking in her eagerness to display the discovery she had made.

"Miss Pratt!" cried the Earl, in a tone enough to have settled quicksilver itself, "Miss Pratt, this behaviour of yours is—is—what I cannot possibly permit—the Yellow Turret is my private dressing-room, and it is surely a most improper and unwarrantable liberty——"

"I beg you ten thousand pardons, my dear Lord Rossville! I really had quite forgot the change you have made in your dressing-room; but, at any rate, I would have figured every creek and corner of yours fit to be seen at all times. There's Mr. Whyte—his dressing-room is a perfect show, so neat and nick-nacky; his silver shoe-horn would be an ornament to any drawing-room."

"Miss Pratt, this is really——I——," and his

Lordship hemmed in a manner which showed the greatest discomposure.

"As we cannot be gratified with a sight of Mr. Whyte's shoe-horn," said Colonel Delmour, "it would certainly be some solace to be allowed to behold your Lordship's goddess; I had forgot that picture, it is so long since I have seen it; but I should certainly wish to prostrate myself at her shrine now." And he looked to Miss St. Clair as he spoke, in a manner to give more meaning to his words than met the ear.

The Earl was much embarrassed. He was provoked at the irreverent and indecorous manner in which Miss Pratt had been going to rush into his dressing-room; and he was piqued at the insinuation she had thrown out of its not being fit to be seen. He therefore wavered betwixt his desire of punishing her presumption by exclusion, or vindicating his own character by instant and unpremeditated admission. After maturely weighing the matter, he decided upon the latter mode of proceeding, and said,—

"Although I have certainly no idea of permitting my private apartments to be thrown open whenever idle or impertinent, or, it may be, ill-disposed curiosity might prompt the wish, yet I do not object to gratify either my own family and friends, or even the public in general, with a view of them, when the request is properly conveyed, and at a proper and reasonable hour; for, if there is a *time* for everything, it should likewise be remembered there is a *manner* for everything; and although I do not consider a gentleman's

dressing-room as the most elegant and delicate exhibition for ladies, yet, upon this occasion, if they are so inclined"—bowing all round—"I shall be happy to conduct them to my private apartments."

"The sooner the better," cried Miss Pratt, while the very ribbons on her bonnet seemed to vibrate with impatience. "Come, my dear, and see yourself as a goddess;" and again seizing Miss St. Clair, away she pattered full speed.

"There's a broom where a broom shouldn't be," darting her eyes into the dark corner of a passage as she whisked through it; then, peeping into a closet —"and for all the work he makes, I don't think his maids are a bit better than other people's."

CHAPTER IX.

"What doth he get who ere prefers
The scutcheon of his ancestors?
This chimney-piece of gold or brass;
That coat of arms blazon'd in glass;
When these with time and age have end,
Thy prowess must thyself commend;
True nobleness doth those alone engage,
Who can add virtues to their parentage."
Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmoreland.

UPON entering the turret, the first thing that caught Miss Pratt's eye was a shaving-glass, which she asserted was by no means the proper size and shape for that purpose, being quite different from the one used by Anthony Whyte, which was broader than it was long, while Lord Rossville's was longer than it was broad. A dispute, of course, ensued, for the Earl would not be bearded upon such a subject by any woman—when, suddenly giving him the slip in the argument, she exclaimed, "But, bless me, we're forgetting the Diana—and what a bad light you've put her in! There's a great art in hanging pictures; Mr. Whyte brought a man all the way from London to hang his; and I'll never forget my fright when he told me the hangman was coming. Now I see her where I stand

—Mrs. St. Clair, come a little more this way—there now—was there ever such a likeness?"

"Astonishing!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, in amazement.

"Diana never had such incense offered to her before," said Colonel Delmour.

"The resemblance, if, indeed, there is a resemblance," said the Earl in manifest displeasure, "is extremely imperfect; the portrait represents a considerably larger and more robust-looking person than Miss St. Clair; it has also something of a bold and masculine air, which, I own, I should be sorry to perceive in any young lady in whom I take any interest, since nothing, in my opinion, derogates so much from female loveliness as a forward or presuming carriage."

"My dear Lord Rossville! how anybody, who has eyes in their head, can dispute that resemblance—just turn round, my dear, and show yourself,"—to Miss St. Clair, who, ashamed of the scrutiny, had turned away, and was conversing with Colonel Delmour a little apart. Mr. Lyndsay contemplated the picture with a thoughtful air, and occasionally stole a glance at Gertrude, but said nothing.

"How do you account for such an extraordinary likeness?" inquired Lady Betty of Mrs. St. Clair, as she stood, with her fat Flora under her arm, staring at the picture.

"I am quite at a loss—if this picture is an ideal creation of the painter's imagination."

"It's not that, I can assure you," interrupted Miss

Pratt. "The original was a real flesh-and-blood living person, or I've been misinformed,"—with a look of interrogation to Lord Rossville.

"If one of the family, however remote the resemblance, as Lord Rossville justly remarked, does sometimes revive, even at distant periods, in the person of——;" but Mrs. St. Clair did not get leave to finish her sentence.

"Oh, if Diana had been a St. Clair, there would have been no wonder in the matter, you know!" again dashed in the intolerable Pratt; "but the truth of the matter is, she was neither more nor less than bonny Lizzie Lundie, the huntsman's daughter. Much I've heard about Lizzie Lundie, and many a fine song was made upon her, for she was the greatest beauty in the country, high or low. There's one of the songs that's all the fashion now, that I remember singing when I was young, but they've changed the name from Lundie to Lyndsay," and Miss Pratt, in a cracked and unmusical voice, struck up,

"Will you go to the Hielands, Leezy Lyndsay," etc.

Lord Rossville seemed somewhat disconcerted at this abrupt disclosure of his Diana's humble pedigree, and anxious to account for Lizzie Lundie, the huntsman's daughter, being permitted a place amongst the nobles of the land, and that too in his private apartment, he therefore made all possible haste to atone for this solecism in dignity, and having hemmed three times began—

"Since this picture has attracted so much attention, and called forth so much animadversion, it is proper, and, indeed, necessary, that some elucidation should be thrown on the circumstances to which it owes its birth."

And again the Earl paused, hemmed, and looked round like a peacock spreading its plumage, and straining its neck in all directions, before it can even lift the crumb that has been thrown to it—while Miss Pratt, like a pert active sparrow, taking advantage of its attitudes, darts down and bears off the prize.

"Oh, the story's soon told, for there's no great mystery about it. The late Lord there"—pointing to a picture of a fat chubby gentleman in a green coat, hunting-horn, and bag-wig—"was a second Nimrod in his young days, and had a perfect craze for dogs and horses, and he brought a famous painter here from some place abroad, I forget the name of it now, to take the beasts' likenesses—as old Lady Christian used to say, it was a scandal to think of dogs sitting for their pictures—ha! ha! ha! In particular, there was a famous pack of hounds to sit, and the painter, chancing to see Lizzie one day with them about her, was struck with the fancy of doing her as a Diana; and it was really a good idea, for I think she's the outset of the picture—Anthony Whyte says he would give a hundred guineas merely for her head and shoulders."

Mrs. St. Clair had changed colour repeatedly dur-

ing this piece of biography, and seemed not a little mortified at discovering that her daughter's beauty claimed no higher original than the huntsman's daughter. Upon a more close inspection, she therefore declared that although there might be something in the *tout ensemble* to catch the eye at first sight, yet, upon examination, it would be found the features and expression were totally different.

But Lord Rossville, resolved not to be baulked of his story, now commenced a more diffuse narrative of the circumstances to which Lizzie Lundie owed her posthumous fame, concluding with his most unqualified dissent as to the possibility of there being the slightest resemblance except in the colour of the hair. But to do Miss Pratt justice, the resemblance was very remarkable. The Diana's features were on a larger scale, and her countenance had a less soft and intellectual cast than Miss St. Clair's; her figure was also more robust than elegant, her complexion rather vivid than transparent, and her air rather bold than dignified; but there was the same long-shaped, soft, dark-blue eyes, the same Grecian nose and mouth, the same silky, waving, dark ringlets, curling naturally around the open ivory forehead, forming altogether that rare and peculiar style of beauty where the utmost delicacy of feature is yet marked and expressive, and the strongest contrasts of colour are blended into one harmonious whole.

"Pray, what became of this divinity?" inquired Colonel Delmour.

"I'm sure I can't tell you; I think the story was that she had been crossed in love with some gentleman, and that she married a Highland drover, or tacksman, I can't tell which, and they went all to sticks and staves."

"How provoking," said Colonel Delmour, as he still stood contemplating the picture, "that so much beauty should have been created in vain."

"How do you know that it was created in vain?" said Mr. Lyndsay.

"Considering how very rare a thing beauty, perfect beauty, is, there certainly seems to have been rather a lavish expenditure of it on the huntsman's daughter and drover's wife."

"Colonel Delmour, don't you remember what the poet says on that:

'There's many a flower that's born to grow unseen,
And waste its beauty on the senseless air.'"

"However rare beauty may be," said Mr. Lyndsay, passing over Miss Pratt's quotation, "your desire of confining it to the higher orders is rather too arbitrary."

"They certainly can better appreciate it," returned Colonel Delmour; "there is a refinement of taste requisite to admire such beauty as that," and he glanced from the Diana to Miss St. Clair. "How could one of the *canaille* possibly comprehend the fine antique cast of those features, the classical contour of the head, the swan-like throat, the inimitable moulding of the cheek; would not a pair of round white eyes, and

blowzy red cheeks, with a snub nose, and a mouth from ear to ear, have been quite as well bestowed upon the drover?"

"I daresay he could not talk so scientifically on the subject as you do," said Mr. Lyndsay; "but, for all that, he might have been as fond of his wife, and as proud of her too, as either you or I could have been."

"Impossible— that is, supposing she had been of my own rank and station—not Venus herself could have won me to a *mésalliance.*"

"Suppose the huntsman's daughter had been as perfect in mind and manner as in person——"

"The idea is absurd—the thing is impossible," interrupted Colonel Delmour, impatiently.

"It is certainly difficult to conceive refinement of manners in a person of low birth; but why may not a noble mind be conferred on a peasant as well as on a prince?"

"What!" cried Colonel Delmour, indignantly, "do you really pretend to say that the offspring of a clown or a mechanic—animals who have walked the world in hob-nailed shoes, or sat all their lives cross-legged, with their noses at a grinding-wheel, can possibly possess the same lofty spirit as the descendants of heroes and statesmen? The very thought of being so descended must elevate the mind, and give it a conscious superiority over the low-born drudges of the earth."

"Then you must feel yourself greatly superior in

mind to Virgil, Horace, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and a long *et cætera* of illustrious names, down to the present day, who, if not absolutely low-born, have yet no pretensions to high birth. For my own part, I think it is rather humbling than elevating to reflect on the titled insignificance of this very family, who, though possessed of honours, wealth, and power for centuries, has never produced one man eminent for his virtues or his talents—nor, if we may trust to painters, one female celebrated for such beauty as this poor huntsman's daughter."

"You see her as a goddess, remember," said Colonel Delmour, ironically; "perhaps in her blue flannel *jupon*, unsandalled feet, 'and kerchief, in a comely' cotton gown, carrying a mess to the dogs, she would have had fewer attractions even for your noble nature."

"There is a taste in moral as well as in corporeal beauty," said Mr. Lyndsay, "and I can love and admire both for their own intrinsic merits without the aid of ornament. You, Delmour, must have them in court dress, with stars and coronets; but with beauty such as that," and his eye unconsciously rested on Gertrude, "had the mind, principles, and manners corresponded to it, I could have loved even Lizzie Lundie—perhaps too well."

"Had the huntsman's daughter been an angel and a goddess in one," replied Colonel Delmour, warmly, "I never could have thought of her as my wife—there is degradation in the very idea."

All this while Miss Pratt had, as usual, been gabbling to the rest of the party, in a manner which prevented their hearing or joining in this argument. Miss St. Clair, indeed, had contrived to pick up a little of it, and warmly adopted Colonel Delmour's sentiments on the subject.

"I wonder what became of Lizzie's family, for I think always I heard she had a daughter as great a beauty as herself—I've a notion it was a daughter of hers——Mrs. St. Clair, are you well enough?—Bless my heart, she's going to faint!"

All crowded round Mrs. St. Clair, who seemed, indeed, on the point of fainting—the windows were thrown open—water was brought—smelling-bottles applied—till, at length, she revived, and, with a faint smile, avowed that she had been indisposed for some days, and was subject to spasms of that nature. Lord Rossville bent over his sister-in-law, as she sat at the open window, with the utmost solicitude; he felt really interested in her, for she had listened to him with the most unceasing attention, and without once interrupting him—a degree of deference he was little accustomed to in his own family. At length she declared herself perfectly recovered, and, supported by his Lordship and her daughter, she retired to her own apartment.

"That was an unlucky remark of yours, Colonel, about low marriages," whispered Miss Pratt; "I really think it was that that overset her—though I suspect Lizzie Lundie had something to do with it too; very

likely some relationship there, for you know th Blacks are not just at the top of the tree,"—with knowing wink,—"that, and the smell of Lord Ross ville's boots and shoes together, was really enough t overset her;" but Miss Pratt was now left to gabbl to herself, for the rest of the party had dispersed.

CHAPTER X.

"I cannot blame theo,
Who am myself attach'd with weariness,
To the dulling of my spirits."

Tempest.

"How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world," is a feeling that must be more or less experienced by every one who has feeling enough to distinguish one sensation from another, and leisure enough to weary. There are people, it is well known, who have no feelings, and there are others who have not time to feel; but, alas! there are many whose misfortune it is to have feeling and leisure, and who have time to be nervous, have time to be discontented, have time to be unhappy, have time to feel ill-used by the world, have time to weary of pleasure in every shape; to weary of men, women, and children; to weary of books, grave and witty; to weary of authors, and even of authoresses; and who would have wearied as much of the wit of a Madame de Staël as of the babbles of Miss Pratt.

In this disposition, perhaps the only solace is to find some tangible and lawful object of which to weary—some legitimate source of ennui, and then

"sweet are the uses of adversity," when they come even in the questionable shape of a Miss Pratt. In the hum-drum society of a dull county, what a relief to the weary soul to have some person to weary of! To have a sort of *bag-fox* to turn out, when fresh game cannot be had, is an enjoyment which many of my readers have doubtless experienced. Such was Miss Pratt—everybody wearied of her, or said they wearied of her, and everybody abused her, while yet she was more sought after and asked about than she would have been had she possessed the wisdom of a More, or the benevolence of a Fry. She was, in fact, the very heart of the shire, and gave life and energy to all the pulses of the parish. She supplied it with streams of gossip and chit-chat in others, and subject of ridicule and abuse in herself. Even the dullest laird had something good to *tell* of Miss Pratt, and something bad to *say* of her; for nothing can convey a more opposite meaning than these apparent synonyms.

But there was no one to whom Miss Pratt was so unequivocal a pest as to Lord Rossville, for his Lordship was a stranger to ennui; perhaps cause and effect are rarely combined in one person, and those who can weary others possess a never-failing source of amusement in themselves. Besides, the Earl was independent of Miss Pratt, as he possessed a wide range for his unwearying wearying powers in his own family; for he could weary his steward, and his housekeeper, and his gamekeeper, and his coachman, and his groom, and his gardener all the hours of

the day, by perpetual fault-finding and directing. Perhaps, after all, the only uncloying pleasure in life is that of finding fault. The gamester may weary of his dice; the lover of his charmer; the *bon-vivant* of his bottle; the virtuoso of his virtû; but while this round world remains with all its imperfections on its head, the real fault-finder will never weary of finding fault. The provoking part of Miss Pratt was that there was no possibility of finding fault with her. As well might Lord Rossville have attempted to admonish the brook that babbled past him, or have read lectures to the fly which buzzed round his head. For forty years Lord Rossville had been trying to break her in, but in vain. Much may be done, as we every day see, to alter and overcome nature: Ponies are made to waltz; horses to hand tea-kettles; dogs to read; birds to cast accounts; fleas to walk in harness; but to restrain the volubility of a female tongue is a task that has hitherto defied the power of man. With so much of what may be styled dissonance in similarity, it may easily be imagined that Lord Rossville and Miss Pratt, even when most in unison, produced anything but harmony. Yet they only jarred—they never actually quarrelled, for they had been accustomed to each other all their lives; and while she laid all the rebuffs and reproofs she received to the score of bile, he tolerated her impertinence on account of blood.

The softness and suavity of Mrs. St. Clair's manners formed so striking a contrast to the sharp, gnat-like attacks of Miss Pratt, that Lord Rossville became

every day more attached to his sister-in-law's company, and she soon found herself so firmly fixed in his good graces that she ventured to request permission that she and her daughter might be allowed to visit her relations, with whom she had hitherto only communicated by letter.

"Certainly, my dear madam," replied the Earl; "nothing can be more proper and reasonable than that you should recognise and visit the different members of your own family, who, I am happy to think, are all persons of unblemished reputation and respectable stations in life, which respectability is in a fair way of being increased by votes which, I understand, an uncle and brother of yours have lately acquired in the county; and as there is every appearance of our having a warmly-contested election shortly, their political influence, if properly directed, cannot fail of proving highly beneficial to them. I therefore give my unqualified assent as to the propriety of your visiting your own family, as soon as we can arrange the proper time, mode, and manner of doing so; but, with regard to the daughter of the Honourable Thomas St. Clair, I must candidly acknowledge to you, my dear madam, I have not yet brought my mind to any fixed determination on that point —your own good sense will naturally point out to you the very peculiar situation in which she stands. Miss St. Clair is at present to be viewed as the heiress *presumptive* to the titles, honours, and estates of this family; but, observe, although *presumptive*, she is by no means heiress *ap-*

parent—for there is a wide and important distinction betwixt these apparent synonyms." Here his Lordship entered into a most elaborate explanation of these differences of distinction. "And now, my dear madam, I am sure you will agree with me that, in a situation of such peculiar delicacy, every step which Miss St. Clair takes ought to be weighed with the utmost nicety and deliberation, since what might be befitting the heiress presumptive might be deemed derogatory to the heiress apparent; and what dignity demands of the heiress apparent, the world might censure as an undue assumption of consequence in the heiress presumptive."

Mrs. St. Clair, though choking with indignation at this round-about insinuation that her family was scarcely fit to be associated with by her own daughter, yet repressed her indignation, and as she did not consider it of much consequence that she should accompany her on her first visit, she readily yielded the matter with a good grace. But no sooner had she done so than the Earl, as was often his custom, immediately tacked about and took the opposite side of the argument. The result was that Mrs. and Miss St. Clair should immediately proceed to visit the respective members of the Black family, and the Earl's travelling chariot-and-four, with all appliances to boot, was ordered out for the occasion. It was with a thrill of delight Mrs. St. Clair took her place in it, and drove off in all the éclat of rank and state.

CHAPTER XI.

> "Pictures like these, dear madam, to design,
> Ask no firm hand, and no unerring line.
> Some wandering touches, some reflected light,
> Some flying stroke alone can hit 'em right."
>
> POPE.

FEARFUL anticipations mingled with Mrs. St. Clair's natural affection, as she thought of the meeting with her own family. Its only members consisted of a brother—who, partly by industry, partly by good fortune, had become the proprietor of a large tract of unimproved land in the neighbourhood; two unmarried sisters residing in the county town; and an old uncle from the East Indies, a half-brother of her mother's, reported to be enormously rich. When she had left home her brother was a mere raw, unformed lad, but he was now an elderly man, the husband of a woman she had never seen, and the father of a numerous family. After quitting the noble domain of Rossville, the country gradually assumed a less picturesque appearance—rocks, woods, and rivers now gave way to arable land, well-fenced fields, and well-filled barnyards; while these in turn yielded to vast tracts of improvable land, thriving belts of

young plantation, ringstone dikes, and drains in all directions.

It was in the midst of this scenery that Bellevue stood pre-eminent. It was a showy, white-washed, winged-house, situated on the top of the hill, commanding an extensive view of "muirs and mosses many, O," with traces of cultivation interspersed, and which by many was considered as a very fine—and by all was styled a very commanding—prospect. A dazzling white gate, with spruce canister lodge, opened upon a well-gravelled avenue which led to the mansion, surrounded by a little smiling lawn, with a tuft of evergreens in the centre. On one hand appeared a promising garden wall; on the other a set of commodious-looking farm-offices; everything was in the highest order—all bespoke the flourishing gentleman-farmer. The door was opened by a stout, florid foot-boy in flaunting livery, whose yellow locks seemed to stiffen at sight of the splendid equipage that met his view. The interrogatories, however, at length recalled him to a sense of duty; and upon the question being put for the third time, whether his master or mistress were at home, he returned that cautious answer, which marks the wary, well-tutored, though perplexed menial, *i.e.*, that he was not sure, but he would see. After an interval of about five minutes, during which much opening and shutting of doors was heard, and many a head was seen peeping over blinds and from behind shutters, the prudent Will returned with an invitation to the ladies to alight; and, leading the

way, he conducted to a well-furnished, but evidently uninhabited drawing-room, where he left them with an assurance that his mistress would be there in a minute. Many minutes, however, elapsed, during which the visitors were left to find amusement for themselves, which was no easy task where the materials were wanting. In such circumstances a fire is a never-failing resource—if bad we can stir it, if good we can enjoy it; but here was no fire, and the bright handsome stove was only to be admired for itself, and the profusion of white paper which filled it. The carpet was covered, the chairs were in their wrappers, the screens were in bags—even the chimney-piece, that refuge of the weary, showed only two handsome girandoles. There were two portraits, indeed, large as life, hanging on each side of the fireplace, in all the rawness of bad painting, glaring in tints which Time himself could never mellow. The one, it might be presumed, was Mr. Black, in a bright-blue coat, pure white waistcoat, and drooping Fall of Foyers-looking neckcloth, holding a glove, and looking very sensible. The other, it might be inferred, was Mrs. Black, sitting under a tree, in a yellow gown and ill put on turban, smiling with all her might; and both evidently bent upon putting all the expression they possibly could into their faces, by way of getting a good pennyworth for their money.

At length the door opened, and Mrs. Black, in *propria persona*, entered, followed by a train of daughters. She was rather *embonpoint*, with a fine healthy colour,

clear blue eyes, and an open, good-humoured expression of countenance—forming, altogether, what is expressively termed a comely woman, which, if it mean something less than beauty, is often more attractive. She had evidently been dressing for the occasion, as her gown seemed scarcely yet out of the fold, but looked like a thing apart from her, and had that inexpressible air of constraint which gowns will have when gowns are made things of primary importance.

Mrs. Black welcomed her guests in a manner which, if it had nothing of the elegance of *ton*, was yet free from affectation or pretension. She expressed her regret that Mr. Black should be from home; but she had sent in search of him, and hoped he would soon *cast up*. Mrs. St. Clair, resolving to be delightful, sat with her sister-in-law's hand in hers, and, with a face of the most affectionate interest, was presently deep in inquiries as to the state of her family, the number of her children, their ages, sexes, names, pursuits, and so forth. The amount of the information she received was this:—Mrs. Black was the mother of eleven children living, and two dead;—her eldest daughter (who had just gone to take a walk) was going to be married, and her youngest to be weaned. It was thought a very good marriage for Bell, as Major Waddell had made a handsome fortune in the Company's service, and was very well connected in the county, being cousin-german to Sir William Waddell of Waddell Mains, and very likely to succeed to him, if he was spared. He was also related to the Bogs of Boghall,

and the present Boghall had married a daughter of Lord Fairacre's, and their son was going to stand for the county. Major Waddell, to be sure, was a good deal older than Bell; but he had kept his health well in India, and though not a beauty, was very well—at least he pleased Bell, and that was everything. Due congratulations were here offered by Mrs. St. Clair, with the customary remarks of its being a pleasant and desirable thing for the first of a family to form a respectable connection; that any disparity of years was on the right side, etc. etc. etc.; concluding with a request to be favoured with a sight of the young people. Mrs. Black's eyes beamed delight as she pulled the bell, and gave orders for the children to be brought, observing, at the same time, that they were sad romps, and seldom fit to be seen. Miss St. Clair, meanwhile, was engaged with her cousins, pretty, good-natured-looking girls, one of whom talked much of balls, and officers, and poetry; but as the children entered, she sighed, and said, there was an end of all rational conversation. The young Masters and Misses Black had all evidently been preparing for exhibition. They were fine, stout, blooming, awkward creatures, with shining faces, and straight-combed, though rebellious-looking, hair; while a smart cap, red eyes, and sour face bespoke the sufferings of the baby. Altogether, they formed what is politely called an uncommon fine family; they all made bows and curtseys, walked with their toes in, stood with their fingers in their mouths—and, in short, were a very fine family.

Of course they were much commended and caressed by their new relations, till the entrance of Mr. Black turned the attention into another channel. Mr. Black was the only one of the family on whom the phenomenon of a chaise-and-four had produced no visible effect;—he entered ill-dressed, overheated, and with a common, even vulgar air—though, in reality, he was rather a good-looking man. Mrs. St. Clair had expected something of a *scene* at meeting with her brother; but he seemed to have no thoughts of anything of the kind, for he received his sister with that look and manner of plain hearty welcome which showed that anything of fine feeling would be completely thrown away. Yet his greeting was sufficiently affectionate in its own blunt, homely kind.

"It is a long time since you and I have met, Sally," said he, as he seated himself beside his sister, with a child on each knee; "but you have kept your looks well—to be sure you haven't had so large a share of the evils of life as I have had,"—looking round with evident pride and exultation on his offspring, and affecting to sigh at the same time. Mrs. St. Clair shook her head, and sighed too; but her sigh was a much better got-up sigh than her brother's: it said, or was intended to say, "Heaven only knows what I have suffered for that one!"

Mrs. Black seemed to understand it, for she said, with a look of sympathy,—

"I am sure an only child must be a great misfortune, and we have great reason to be thankful, Mr.

Black, that so many of ours have been spared." Then beckoning one of her daughters, she whispered some instructions to her, accompanied with a key. The young lady left the room, and in a few minutes the yellow-haired laddie entered, bearing a massive silver tray, conveying the richest of cakes and the strongest and sweetest of wines. As Miss St. Clair threw back her bonnet to partake of the hospitalities, her uncle regarded her with more earnestness than good-breeding, then glanced all round on his own offspring.

"I'm trying if I can make out a likeness betwixt your daughter and my brats," said he to his sister; "but I don't think she has much of a Black face."

"She is thought to resemble her father's family more than mine," replied Mrs. St. Clair,—colouring deeply, and looking rather displeased.

"None of them that I have ever seen," returned Mr. Black;—"her father, if I remember right, had light hair and a flat face, and——"

"There is no end to arguing upon resemblances," interrupted Mrs. St. Clair, rising hastily; "the general expression is sometimes very strong, when every feature is different;"—and she was preparing to depart, when one of the children, who was looking out at a window, exclaimed, "Here's Bell and the Major!"—and to depart in the face of Bell and the Major was declared to be impossible; so Mrs. St. Clair, though fretting at the delay, was obliged to await the entrance of the lovers.

Fortunately Miss Bell had no *toilette* duties to

perform, for she was dressed for the Major in a fashionable gown made by Miss Skrimpskirt of Tattleton, from a pattern of Miss Gorewell's in Edinburgh, who had got it from Miss Fleecewell of London, who had had hers direct from Madame Chefdœuvre of Paris. Miss Bell, therefore, felt no disheartening doubts as to her appearance; but firmly relying on the justness of her proportions, and the orthodox length of her waist, and breadth of her shoulders, and strong in the consciousness of being flounced and hemmed up to the knees, she boldly entered, followed by her betrothed. Miss Isabella Black was really a very pretty girl; she had a pretty figure, pretty features, pretty hair, a pretty complexion, a pretty bonnet, a pretty shawl, pretty boots, and a pretty watch. But over all this prettiness was diffused an intolerable air of folly, affectation, and conceit, which completely marred the effect of her charms.

Major Waddell was a very passable sort of person for a nabob;—he had a dingy bronze complexion, tawny eyes, tolerable teeth, and a long, wrinkled, smirking, baboonish physiognomy.

"Why, Bell, we were afraid you had run away with the Major," said Mr. Black, facetiously, addressing his daughter on her entrance.

"That is a very odd speech, I think, papa, to one in my situation," said Miss Bell, affecting to look much disconcerted.

"Come, come, here are no strangers, so there

need be no secrets—it is pretty well known that if you don't run away with the Major, the Major will run away with you some of these days."

Here Mr. Black laughed, and Mrs. Black laughed, and all the Masters and Misses Black laughed loud and long,—while in the general laugh the fair bride, as if overwhelmed with confusion, took her cousin aside and whispered—

"This is a very awkward scrape I am brought into by papa's bluntness. It certainly was my intention to have announced the matter to my aunt and you at a proper time, but not just at present; so I must request as a particular favour that you will say nothing about it at Rossville; it is so very unpleasant to be the talk of the whole county upon an affair of this kind that the Major and I had resolved to have it kept as quiet as possible. It was only yesterday he communicated it to Sir William Waddell, and he has not yet mentioned it to Lord Fairacre, or any of his other relations."

Mrs. St. Clair was too impatient to be gone to allow any further latitude for the lovers to show off, but was again in the midst of leave-taking. Much was said about having a longer visit—of taking a family dinner—of spending a few days—of leaving Miss St. Clair to spend a little time and get acquainted with her cousins; and Mrs. St. Clair could only disengage herself from this well-meant hospitality by promising to take the earliest opportunity of repeating her visit. "I trust I may be excused from re-

turning this visit," said Miss Bell, with a look of modest importance, "as in my situation I go nowhere at present."

Escorted by Mr. Black and the Major, and followed by the whole family, Mrs. and Miss St. Clair resumed their places in the carriage, and were soon driven beyond the precincts of Bellevue. Their next destination was to the house of the Miss Blacks, in the county town, and there they were accordingly driven.

CHAPTER XII.

"Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain
Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain.
Awake but one, and lo! what myriads rise!
Each stamps its image as the other flies!
Each, as the various avenues of sense,
Delight or sorrow to the soul dispense,
Brightens or fades; yet all, with magic art,
Control the latent fibres of the heart."

Pleasures of Memory.

THERE are few minds so callous as to revisit the scenes of their childhood without experiencing some emotion. And whether these scenes lie in the crowded city, amidst all the coarse and ordinary objects of vulgar life, or in the lonely valley, with its green hills and its gliding stream, the same feelings swell the heart as the thoughts of the past rush over it; for they speak to us of the careless days of our childhood, of the gay dreams of our youth, of the transient pleasures of our prime, of the faded joys of our old age. They speak to us of parents now sleeping in the dust, of playfellows in a far distant land, of companions altered or alienated, of friends become as strangers, of love changed into indifference. They speak to us, it may be, of time misspent, of talents

misapplied, of warnings neglected, of blessings despised, of peace departed. They may speak to us, perchance, of God's holy law slighted, of His precepts contemned, of Himself forsaken; of hearts, alas! not purified and renewed by that grace whose aid they never sought, but, like the wasted volcano, parched and blasted in their own unholy fires. Fairer scenes all may have viewed than those on which their eyes first opened, but in them we behold only the inanimate objects of nature, which, however they may charm the senses or fill the imagination, yet want that deep and powerful interest which seems entwined with our existence, and which gives "a local habitation and a name" so powerful a mastery over us.

Something, too, there is of solemn thought in returning to a *father's house*—whether that father's arms are open to receive his long-absent child, or whether the eye that would have welcomed, and the tongue that would have blessed us, are now mouldering in the grave. Ah! many are the wild tumultuous waves that roll over the human mind, and obliterate many of its fairest characters—its fondest recollections. But still the indelible impression of a parent's love remains impressed upon the heart. Even when steeped in guilt or seared in crime, one spot—one little spot—will still be found consecrated to the purest, the holiest, of earthly affections.

It was with these mingled emotions Mrs. St. Clair found herself at the door of that mansion she had

quitted thirty-three years ago. It was the house in which she had first seen the light—where her parents had dwelt, and where she had left them surrounded by a numerous family, but all were gone save the brother she had just seen, and two sisters, now its sole tenants. Even the most artificial characters still retain some natural feelings, and as Mrs. St. Clair crossed the threshold of her once happy home, and the thoughts of the past rushed over her, she exclaimed with a burst of anguish,—

"Would to God I had never left it!" and, throwing herself upon a seat, she wept without control.

There is something in real emotion that always carries conviction along with it. Although well-accustomed to the ebullitions of her mother's character, Miss St. Clair saw and felt the depth of her present feelings, and sought by her tender and affectionate sympathy to soften her sense of sorrow. But, with a look and gesture, expressive only of abhorrence, her mother repelled her from her. At that moment a lady approached, and, throwing herself into her arms, Mrs. St. Clair sobbed in bitterness of spirit, while her sister mingled her tears with hers. Miss Black was the first to regain her composure, and she said in a voice which, though still tremulous with emotion, was yet soft and sweet,—

"I love those feelings, my dear Sarah; they are so natural. You miss all those you left behind, and you are thinking what a happier meeting this might have been, had it pleased God to have spared them to us;

but I trust there *is* a happy meeting yet in store for us."

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed Mrs. St. Clair almost convulsively, as she leant her head on her sister's shoulder.

"My dear Sarah," said Miss Black in a tone of tender reproach, accompanied by an affectionate embrace; "but come, let me take you to our poor Mary, who cannot go to you."

Mrs. St. Clair raised her head, and made an effort to subdue her emotion as she suffered herself to be led to the apartment where her youngest and favourite sister was. When she had left home she had left her a lovely romping child of five years old, with laughing blue eyes and curling flaxen hair; and this image of infant beauty she had ever treasured in her memory, though reason had told her the reality had long since fled. But, alas! reason can but imperfectly picture to us the slow and silent ravages of time; and at sight of her sister Mrs. St. Clair felt as much shocked as though the change had been the metamorphose of an instant instead of the gradual progress of years of suffering and decay. Imagination, indeed, could not have pictured to itself aught so affecting as the contrast thus presented by a glance of the mind. Mrs. St. Clair thought only of the gay, rosy, frolicsome creature, whose fairy form seemed even yet to bound before her eyes, or hang round her neck in infantine fondness; and on that self-same spot where last she had parted from her she now beheld her a monument of premature decay—pale, motionless, and

paralytic. For a moment she shrunk from the half living, half beatified looking being, with that instinctive horror with which the worldly mind recoils from all that reminds it of perishable nature. A faint streak of red tinged her sister's sallow cheek, and a tear glistened in her soft-blue eye, and her heart seemed to swell—perhaps with some almost forgotten feelings of humiliation at her own infirmities. But when Mrs. St. Clair again looked, the slight hectic had fled, the tear was dried, and the sigh was checked.

"God's will be done, my sister!" said she, with a look and accent of meek and holy resignation. Mrs. St. Clair could not speak, but she threw herself on her sister's neck and wept.

Gertrude, meanwhile, had stood aloof—her heart oppressed with sorrow, and her eyes filled with tears, as she contrasted her mother's feelings towards her sisters with those she had testified towards her; and the painful conviction that she was not beloved forced itself upon her in all the bitterness such a discovery was calculated to excite. At length the agitation of the meeting between the sisters began to subside, and Miss Black, approaching her niece, tenderly embraced her, and led her to her sister. "Here is a stranger who has been too long overlooked," said she; "but once seen she will not be soon forgotten;" and she gently untied her bonnet, and looked on her with eyes of delighted affection. Her Aunt Mary sweetly welcomed her, and also regarded her with an expression of love and tenderness, such as Gertrude felt she

never had read even in her mother's eye. There was, indeed, little resemblance between Mrs. St. Clair and her sisters, either in mind or appearance. Elizabeth, the eldest, belonged to that class who can neither be called handsome nor ugly, but are yet sometimes thought both. She had regular features, and a mild, sensible countenance; but she was pale and thin, and, to casual observers, had altogether an air of mediocrity, which, in fact, was rather indicative of the consistency and uniformity of her character. She was a Christian in all things; and its simple, unostentatious spirit pervaded all her looks, words, and actions, and gave to them a charm which, in her station, no worldly acquirements could have imparted. Her sister was many years younger, and in spite of sickness and suffering still retained traces of great beauty. Every feature was perfect; but the dim eye, the pale cheek, and the colourless lip could now only claim pity where once they had challenged admiration. Yet neither pain nor sickness had been able to chase the seraphic expression which beamed on her countenance like sunshine amid ruins. It was the look of one already purified from all earthly passions, but who still looked with love and tenderness on the frailties of her fellow-mortals.

Mrs. St. Clair seemed little gratified by the fondness her sisters testified for her daughter. She remained silent and abstracted, with her eyes fixed on the memorials of former days; for everything remained in the same primitive order as when she had left them;

and everything told some long-forgotten tale, or roused some sad though slumbering recollection. She fixed her eyes on some foreign shells which decorated the old-fashioned chimney-piece,—and what a train of associations did these mute and insignificant objects conjure up! They were the gift of one who had loved her in early youth, and who had brought them to her—(all that he had to bring)—from afar; and dearly had she prized them, for then she had loved the giver. But he was a poor and friendless orphan boy——and she became the wife of an Earl's son.

All may choose their own path in life, but who can tell to where that path may lead? "The lot," indeed, "is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Mrs. St. Clair had chosen that of ambition, and for thirty years she had dragged out life in exile, poverty, and obscurity; while the one she had forsaken—that of faithful and disinterested affection—would have led her to the summit of fame, wealth, and honour. The poor despised sailor-boy had distinguished himself for his skill and bravery, and in the honourable career of his profession had won for himself a noble fortune and a name that would descend to posterity. This Mrs. St. Clair knew, for she had heard of his heroic exploits with feelings of the bitterest regret and self-reproach; and it was those feelings which spread their gloom over her countenance as she looked on the tokens of his youthful love, and thought of the valiant, high-minded being she had bartered for a shadow of great-

ness. She withdrew her eyes, and they fell upon a venerable family Bible, from whence she had been accustomed to hear her mother read a chapter morning and evening to her family. She recalled, as though it had been yesterday, the last evening she had passed in her father's house. The figure of her mother was before her; her voice sounded in her ears; the words recurred to her then as they had often done since. It was the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, unrivalled for its beauty and sublimity by aught that prophet ever spoke or poet wrote, beginning with that touching exhortation—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them;"—and ending with that awful assurance, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Mrs. St. Clair uttered an involuntary groan, and closed her eyes.

"You see much to remind you of the days that are gone, my dear sister," said Miss Black tenderly; "but when the first impression is over, you will love to look upon those relics, as we do, for the sake of those who loved us."

"Never! ah never!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, starting up, and going to the window; "every thing here is torture to me—the very air suffocates me."

She threw open the window and leant out, but it was only to behold other mementoes of days past and gone. She looked upon the little garden, the scene

of many a childish gambol: it lay in the full blaze of a meridian sun, and all was fair and calm. An old laburnum tree still hung its golden blossoms over a rustic seat at one corner of the garden, and the time since she had sat there and decked herself in its fantastic garlands seemed as nothing. She remembered, too, when, after a long childish illness, her father had carried her in his arms to the garden, with what ecstasy she had breathed the fresh air, and looked on the blue sky, and plucked the gaudiest flowers. "It was on such a day as this," thought she; "the air is as fresh now as it was then, the sky is as fair, the flowers as sweet;—but my father —ah! were he still alive, would he thank Heaven now as he did then for having preserved his child!"

And again the bitter drops fell from her eyes as she turned sickening from the view. The chord of feeling had been stretched too high to regain its ordinary pitch without an effort;—it is sometimes easier to break the chain than to loosen it. Mrs. St. Clair felt her mind untuned for ordinary communing, and she therefore took an abrupt leave of her sisters, with a promise of returning soon when her nerves should be stronger. Hurrying through the crowd, collected around the splendid equipage, she threw herself into it as if afraid of being recognised, and called impatiently to her daughter to follow. The postilions cracked their whips; the crowd fell back; and the proud pageant rattled and glittered along till lost to the gaze of the envying and admiring throng.

CHAPTER XIII.

> "Nothing is lost on him who sees,
> With an eye that feeling gave,
> For him there's a story in every breeze,
> And a picture in every wave."
>
> *Song.*

MRS. ST. CLAIR and her daughter proceeded for some time in profound silence. The former seemed plunged in painful meditation, the latter felt grieved and mortified at her mother's caprice and unkindness to her. The first thing which roused Mrs. St. Clair was the view of Rossville Castle, rising proudly above the woods which embosomed it; and, as she looked, gradually her brow cleared, her eye brightened, and her countenance regained its usual expression.

"Gertrude, my love," said she, taking her daughter's hand, "I have almost forgot you to-day. But your own heart will enable you to conceive what mine must have suffered;" and she sighed deeply.

"Yes," answered Miss St. Clair in some agitation, "I can conceive that you have felt much—but I cannot conceive why—— Oh! mamma—what had I done that you should have shook me from you like a venomous reptile?"

"My dear Gertrude! what an idea! that is the

mere coinage of your brain. How can you allow yourself to be so carried away by your imagination? Come, my dear, let us have no more such foolish fancies. Strange, indeed, it would be"—continued she, as the park gate was thrown open to receive them —"in any one to cast off like a reptile the fair heiress of this princely domain."

But however strange her daughter felt, it was so, and she remained silent. Mrs. St. Clair resumed.

"*Apropos*, Gertrude, when you are lady of Rossville, you must build me a little tiny cottage on yon lovely green bank, where I may live quietly as a humble cottager, while you play the great lady. Come, promise me, Gertrude, that I shall have a croft from you—a but and a ben—a cow's grass and a kail-yard."

There was something so forced and unnatural in her mother's sudden gaiety, that Miss St. Clair, accustomed as she was to all the inequalities of her temper, felt almost frightened at it, and she was at a loss how to reply.

"So you won't promise me, Gertrude, even a humble independence for my old age? Perhaps you are right to be cautious. Lear's daughters spoke him fair, and after all turned him out of doors, and why should I expect more from you?"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Miss St. Clair, bursting into tears, "do not kill me with such cruel words."

"Is it so cruel, then, in a mother to crave a pittance from the bounty of her child?"

"It is cruel to doubt that I would give you all—yes, were all this mine to-morrow, I could not be more mistress of it than you shall be."

"So you think at present, Gertrude, but you know not as I do the mutability of the human mind. You will form other ties—other connections; you will marry, and your mother will be forgotten—perhaps forsaken;—you will marry," cried she with increased violence, "you will marry, and I shall be left to starve; you will fall a prey to the artifices of a Colonel Delmour—a needy, desperate spendthrift. I see already he is paying court to the future heiress, and, once the wife of that designing, extravagant man, you will have nothing to bestow."

Shocked and amazed at her mother's violence, Miss St. Clair sought to tranquillise her by assurances that she was mistaken in supposing Colonel Delmour had any such views, when Mrs. St. Clair interrupted her, —"Promise me, then, that you will never become his wife."

There is always something revolting to an open ingenuous mind in being fettered by promises; but there was something more than even that natural repugnance to make Gertrude shrink from thus binding herself to her mother's will, and she remained silent; but the deep blush that burned on her cheek spoke more eloquently than words. Mrs. St. Clair regarded her with a piercing look; then exclaimed, in a transport of anger: "And is it even so—and all that I have done, and suffered, is——" then, suddenly

stopping, she added, in a milder tone,—"Gertrude, my wish is to save you from the dangers with which you are already surrounded; promise me, at least, that you will not marry until you have attained the age of twenty-one—that you will never marry without my consent, and until you have provided for my old age."

"Mamma," said Miss St. Clair, with a calmness and self-possession which bespoke her determination, "I here promise that I will not marry, without your consent, before the age of twenty-one, and until I have provided for you as becomes my mother; more I cannot—I dare not—I *will* not—promise."

"Then with that I must be satisfied," said Mrs. St. Clair, as the carriage stopped at the Castle door; and having alighted, she entered the house, while her daughter stood some minutes on the lawn, inhaling the mild freshness of a west wind laden with the balmy sweets of opening buds and blossoms. Insensibly she strolled on; and gradually the impression of the unpleasant scene she had just had with her mother wore away beneath the calming influence of nature's charms—the clear cloudless sky; the lulling flow of the river; the bright green woods in all the luxuriance of early summer.

Miss St. Clair wandered on till she reached a little secluded spot she had not yet seen. On the top of a green knoll that rose gradually from the river stood part of an ancient building of an irregular and picturesque form, but now almost covered with ivy. Some

cherry, or what, in the language of the country, are called geen trees, grew almost close to it;—they were now white with blossoms, and formed a fanciful contrast to the emblems of age and decay with which they were combined. The ground betwixt the river and the ruin appeared to have been originally a garden, or orchard; and some old apple trees still remained, whose mossy trunks and shrivelled branches bore evidence of their antiquity, while here and there a cluster of rich pink blossoms showed that

> "Life was in the leaf, for still, between
> The fits of falling snow, appear'd the streaky green."

Some aged weeping willows dipt their silvery foliage in the dark waters, as they glided slowly and silently along. It was a scene where the contemplative mind might have mused over the mournful record of time, and things, and people, past and gone, with their joys and their sorrows,—where the youthful imagination might have pictured to itself some ideal paradise yet to be realised.

"Ah!" thought Gertrude, "how willingly would I renounce all the pomp of greatness to dwell here in lowly affection with one who would love me, and whom I could love in return! How strange that I, who could cherish the very worm that crawls beneath my foot, have no one being to whom I can utter the thoughts of my heart—no one on whom I can bestow its best affections!" She raised her eyes, swimming in tears, to heaven; but it was in the poetical enthusiasm of feeling, not in the calm spirit of devotion.

She was suddenly roused by hearing some one approach, and presently Colonel Delmour, forcing his way through some wild tangled bushes, hastened towards her with an appearance of the greatest delight. At sight of him, the thoughts of her mother's warning rushed to her recollection—the dislike she had expressed, the suspicions she harboured, the promise she would have exacted—all seemed to give him a sort of inexplicable interest in her eyes. She coloured deeply, and the consciousness she had done so added to her confusion.

"I have to apologise to you," said Colonel Delmour, "for thus literally forcing my way to you. Lyndsay and I were practising archery when I descried you; to see you, and not to fly to you, was impossible, had Briareus himself opposed my passage; so, leaving Edward master of the field, I winged my way to you like one of my own arrows—but I fear I startled you?"

Miss St. Clair felt as though she were acting in direct disobedience to her mother in thus meeting, even accidentally, with the man she had just heard denounced by her. In great embarrassment she begged he would resume his exercise, and she was moving away when Colonel Delmour caught her hand, and in a low tone said,—

"Do not stir from hence, unless you wish to encounter Miss Pratt's observations; she is beating about here; I saw her as I came along, but I trust she will lose scent. Do remain till that danger is past."

Almost equally averse to encounter Miss Pratt at any time, but more particularly at present, she suffered Colonel Delmour to seat her on a little mossy knoll, and throwing himself on the grass at her feet—

"Be this your throne, and behold your subject," said he in a half serious, half sportive tone; then raising his eyes to hers, he repeated—

> "Le premièr jour qu'on aime on se plait en secret
> A mettre au rang des rois l'objet que l'on adore;
> Et s'il étoit un rang plus eclatant encore
> Ce seroit la celui que le cœur choiseroit."

Miss St. Clair tried to reply in a strain of *badinage*, but the words died on her lips, and colouring still more deeply, she remained silent. At that moment Mr. Lyndsay appeared, but ere he had time to address her, the shrill voice of Miss Pratt was heard, and presently she broke in:

"Ah, ha! so you are all here!—Upon my word, here's a meeting of friends. It puts me in mind of a scene in a play, where all the lovers meet to run away with pretty Mistress Anne Page, and the one cries mum, and the other cries budget."

"Two excellent words," said Colonel Delmour, looking much provoked; "of course you understand their meaning—be silent and be gone."

"Two very impertinent words in my opinion," said Miss Pratt, seating herself beside Gertrude; "and, to tell you the truth, I've no great notion of your mums. There's a family in this county all so tongue-tied, that Anthony Whyte calls their house

the Mummery—and by-the-bye, Mr. Edward, I really think you may cry mum any day; you're grown very silent of late."

"A proof I am growing wiser, I suppose," answered he laughingly, "according to some great authority, who, I think, says most men speak from not knowing how to be silent."

"The saying of some dull blockhead, I suspect," said Colonel Delmour, still evidently out of humour.

"Indeed, I think so too, Colonel," cried Miss Pratt; "anybody can hold their tongue, but it's not everybody that can speak."

"Not every body that ought to speak, or, at least, ought to be listened to," said Colonel Delmour, contemptuously turning from her, and addressing some words in French in a low tone to Gertrude, while Miss Pratt gabbled on—

"Bless me! what a tear I've got in my gown! there's really an ill luck attends this gown; I never have it on without its meeting with some accident—that's all I've got by hunting after you youngsters;" and in the twinkling of an eye her huswife was out—her thimble on her finger, and her needle flying through all the intricacies of a very bad cross tear.

"What's this we were talking about? Oh, about people holding their tongues! I really wish these birds would hold theirs, for I'm perfectly deaved with their chattering—sh, sh," shaking her parasol at a goldfinch. "I really think young people should be made to hold their tongues, and only speak when they're

spoken to—was that a fish that leapt in the water just now?—what a pity but one of you had had a fishing-rod in your hands instead of these senseless bows and arrows! it would have been some amusement to have seen you hook a nice three-pound weight caller trout—and really old people should be cautious of speaking; they're sometimes rather slow, you know—not but what I can listen to anybody. Bless me! how the wind's blowing these blossoms about—I'm like to be blinded with them."

"Come, you shall listen to me, then," said Mr. Lyndsay, as he caught some of the falling blossoms, "while I apostrophise them in some pretty lines of Herrick's—

'TO BLOSSOMS.

'Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past;
But you may stay here yet a while,
To blush and gently smile;
And go at last.

'What were ye born to be,
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good night?
'Twas pity nature brought ye forth,
Merely to show your worth,
And lose you quite.

'But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave;
And after they have shown their pride
Like you a while, they glide
Into the grave.'"

Miss Pratt testified great impatience while the verses were repeating; but the purpose was answered —the time was passed while the fracture was repairing; and, afraid of more poetry—for which she had a mortal antipathy—she readily assented to Miss St. Clair's proposal of returning home.

"I can tell you one thing, my dear," whispered she to Gertrude, "that mum should be the watchword here to-day;—a certain person," with a wink at Colonel Delmour, "is but a younger brother, and not the thing. He can be very pleasant when he pleases; but take my word for it he's not to ride the ford upon. But, bless me, I had no notion it was so late, and I've a bit of lace to run upon my gown before dinner!"—and away ran Miss Pratt to her toilet, while Gertrude retired to her chamber, to ruminate on the events of the day.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Keep, therefore, a true woman's eye,
And love me still, but know not why;
So hast thou the same reason still
To dote upon me ever."
Old Madrigal.

THAT "she who deliberates is lost" is a remark that has been so often verified, that although there are innumerable instances of women deliberating to be saved, yet when a lover suspects the object of his wishes to be debating the question of "To love or not to love," he feels pretty secure that it will be decided in his favour. At least so felt Colonel Delmour, as he marked the thoughtful cast of Miss St. Clair's countenance when she entered the drawing-room before dinner. She had, indeed, that day deliberated more than she had ever done in the whole course of her life before, though her deliberations had not yet assumed any distinct form. By nature tender and affectionate in her disposition, she was likewise high-spirited and impatient of unjust control; and the situation in which she was now placed was calculated to call forth all the latent energies of her character. "Il y a quelquefois dans le cours de la vie, de si chers

plaisirs et de si tendres engagements que l'on nous defend, qu'il est naturel de desirer du moins qu'ils fussent permis."

Miss St. Clair certainly could not help wishing that she had not been forbidden to love her cousin; for, although he had not absolutely declared himself her lover, he had said more than enough to convince her that he was deeply in love, and that the happiness of his life hung upon her decision. When she thought of her mother's prejudice against him, so unjust, so unaccountable, it seemed next to impossible for her to remain in a state of indecision. She must either adopt her mother's sentiments, and hate, fly, abjure him; or she must yield to her own inclinations, and listen to him—look on him, and love him. In this state of mental embarrassment, it was impossible for any one so ingenuous to conceal what was passing in her mind. But those who were most interested in observing her construed her behaviour each according to their own wishes. In her constrained manner and averted eyes, whenever Colonel Delmour addressed her, Mrs. St. Clair flattered herself she saw symptoms of that distrust and dislike she had endeavoured to inculcate; while he for the present felt satisfied in the consciousness that he was at least not an object of indifference.

But it was impossible for any ruminations to be carried on long in the presence of Miss Pratt, whose own ruminations never lasted longer than till she had made herself mistress of the dresses of the company

or the dishes on the table. Having finished her scrutiny of the former she addressed Mrs. St. Clair:

"You were very soon home to-day, I think; you must really have paid fashionable visits to your friends—to be sure your sisters' is not a house to stay long in. Poor Miss Mary! what a pretty creature she was once, and as merry as a grig; but she has taken rather a religious turn now;—to be sure, when people have not the use of their legs what can they do? I'm sure we should be thankful that have all our faculties."

"Except the faculty of being religious," said Mr. Lyndsay, with a smile.

"A certain degree of religion I think extremely proper," said Miss Pratt in a by-way-of serious manner;—"but I'm just afraid it's rather overdone—not that I mean to say anything against the Miss Blacks, for I assure you I have a very high respect for them;—and old Mr Ramsay! how did you find him?—in a tolerable tune, I hope?"

"I was afraid of trespassing too far on Lord Rossville's goodness, by detaining his carriage and servants, and therefore delayed visiting my uncle till another opportunity."

"That was being extremely considerate, indeed," began his Lordship, but as usual, was cut short by Miss Pratt.

"Bless me! what's the use of carriages and servants but to wait? If you had played your cards well you would have gone first to your uncle—an old man in a night-cap, worth good seventy thousand pounds, and as

cross as two sticks, is not to be sneezed at, as Anthony Whyte says; but there's the gong—Oh, Lord Rossville, I wish you would really get a bell, for I declare there's no hearing one's self speak for that gong—or what would you think of a trumpet? Bells and gongs are grown so common that Anthony Whyte's going to get a trumpet."

"Being already provided with a trumpeter, it is quite proper that Mr. Whyte should have a trumpet," said Colonel Delmour.

"Considering with what deadly intentions we assemble at the dinner-table," said Mr. Lyndsay, "I really think a warlike instrument a much more appropriate symbol than a peaceful, fasting, matin-sounding bell—indeed, the organ of destructiveness is always so strong with me at this hour, and I feel so much of the fee, fa, fum about me, that I can scarcely ask you to trust yourself with me," and he good-humouredly gave his arm to Miss Pratt, as she was pattering away to the dining-room, with rather a discomfited look, by herself; "and now for the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," as the party seated themselves at the splendid board. But Miss Pratt's mortification never could be made by any possible means to endure much longer than the shock of a shower-bath; and by the time the dishes were uncovered, Richard was himself again.

"Colonel Delmour, what's that before you?—I think it looks like fricasseed chicken; I'll thank you for some of it;" and Colonel Delmour, with the most

indifferent air as to Miss Pratt's wants, and talking all the while to Miss St. Clair, sent her a part which did not suit her taste.

"Just take that back," said she to the servant, "with my compliments to Colonel Delmour, and I'll be obliged to him for a wing. Colonel, don't you know it's the fashion now, when you help game or poultry, to ask: 'Pray, do you run or fly?' meaning 'Do you choose leg or wing?' There was a good scene at Anthony Whyte's. One day fat Lady Puffendorf was there—you know she's so asthmatic she can hardly walk—so when she chose chicken, 'Pray, ma'am,' says Anthony, 'do you run or fly?' Of course a fine titter ran round the company. Lord Rossville, did you hear that? Colonel Delmour, remember I fly."

"I shall have great pleasure in assisting your flight," said he, with an ironical smile; "pray when may we expect to see Miss Pratt take wing."

"Is that, that you may have a shot at me with your bow and arrow? I thought, indeed, you looked as if you were rather bent upon wounding hearts than harts to-day—you understand the difference, don't you, Miss St. Clair?" who only coloured a reply, and even Colonel Delmour seemed disconcerted. "Well, never mind—mum's the word you know," with a provoking wink; "only, I advise all young ladies who value their hearts to cry budget to gentlemen with bows and arrows." Lord Rossville's ideas, fortunately, never could keep pace with Miss Pratt's tongue; he had now only overtaken her at the "run and fly,"

and was busy preparing, with all the powers of his mind, a caveat against the use of cant terms—to begin with a quotation from Lord Chesterfield, and to be followed up by a full declaration of his own sentiments on the subject. In short, his mode of proceeding was something like bringing out a field-piece to knock down a fly, which, in the meantime, had perched itself on the very mouth of the cannon; unconscious of the formidable artillery that was preparing against her, she buzzed away.

"Let me help you to some asparagrass, my Lord?" helping herself largely in the meantime; "very fine it is, though rather out of season now—it has been long over at Whyte Hall. But who can help asparagrass with asparagrass-tongs! Anthony Whyte says, if ever he's prevailed upon to go into Parliament, it will be for the sole purpose of bringing in three bills for the relief of the rich. One of them is to be an act for the suppression of asparagrass-tongs; another is to make it felony for a cook to twist the legs of game, or force a turkey to carry its head under its wing; and a third is——"

But here Lord Rossville's indignation got the better of his good-breeding, and even overcame the more tardy operations of his mind, and before Anthony Whyte's third bill could be brought forward, he exclaimed, "Mr. Anthony Whyte bring bills into Parliament! Pray, Miss Pratt, have you any authority for supposing, or insinuating, that Mr. Whyte has the most distant shadow of an idea of attempting to pro-

cure a seat in Parliament? If he has, I can only say I have been most grossly misinformed; if he has not, it is highly improper in you, or any of his relations or friends, who the world will naturally conclude are in his confidence, to start such a supposition;—it is a serious, a very serious, matter to tamper with a gentleman's name in politics, more particularly in the troublesome and factious times in which we live." Even Miss Pratt was for an instant discomfited by the solemn indignation of this address; but she quickly rallied, and whispering to Mr. Lyndsay—"He's very bilious to-day; his eyes are like boiled gooseberries, honest man!"—she resumed: "Bless me, Lord Rossville! one would think I had spoken high treason, but I was only joking; Mr. Whyte, I can assure you, has too much good sense to think of going into Parliament; if he had had a mind that way he might have been in long ago; I'm told, from pretty good authority, he might carry the county any day he liked."

Here the Earl absolutely gasped in the attempt to bring up words long and strong enough to immolate the presumption of Miss Pratt and Anthony Whyte. "I can assure you, both Lord Punmedown and Sir Thomas Turnabout spoke seriously to Mr. Whyte about it some time ago. 'Anthony,' says my Lord, 'if you wish to sit you've only to stand.' Nothing could be stronger than that, you know. 'Faith, my Lord,' says he, 'I believe I would have to lie in the first place.' Very good, wasn't it? Anthony's always

ready with his answer; I assure you if he was in Parliament he would keep his own."

"Is there anybody talked of in opposition to Robert?" asked Colonel Delmour, as if he had not even deigned to hear Miss Pratt. "*Apropos*—I had a letter from him this morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Earl with great earnestness. "I am rather surprised that such a piece of information should have been only communicated to me in this accidental manner—I have been anxiously looking for letters from Mr. Delmour for some days; what does he say with regard to the sitting of Parliament, and does he point at any probable time for coming north?"

"I merely glanced at his letter," answered Colonel Delmour, with an air of indifference; "it seemed filled as usual with politics, and I am no politician."

"I am not so sure about that," said Miss Pratt in an under tone, and with a most provoking significant look.

"But you shall hear what he says. Smith"—turning to his servant—"you will find some letters upon the writing-table in my dressing-room; bring them here."

"I hope you don't leave your love-letters lying about that way, Colonel?" cried the incorrigible Pratt. "I assure you, if I was a young lady, I would take care how I corresponded with you—you're not like Anthony Whyte, who keeps all his letters like grim death."

The letters were brought, and Colonel Delmour,

taking his brother's from amongst them, glanced his eye over it, and read in a skimming manner—"Animated and protracted debate—admirable speech—legs two hours and a quarter—immense applause—197 of majority—glorious result—opposition fairly discomfited," etc. etc.; he then read aloud—

"Pray, inform the Earl there is no longer a doubt as to the dissolution of Parliament next session; we must therefore prepare to take the field immediately. Lord P. and Sir J. T. intend to oppose us, I understand, and to bring forward some tool of their own, but I have little fear as to the result. I now only wait the passing of the road bill, and the discussion on the resumption of cash payments, to be off for Scotland; my uncle may therefore expect me in the course of a few days, when I trust we shall be able to make a tolerable muster. *P.S.*—I see a Major Waddell has lodged claim for enrolment; do you know anything of him?"

"Major Waddell!" repeated the Earl, putting his hand to his forehead in a musing attitude, as if endeavouring to recollect him.

"Major Waddell," said Mrs. St. Clair, in her softest manner, "is a gentleman of large fortune, lately returned from India—heir, I understand, to Sir William Waddell, and upon the point of marriage with a niece of mine; his vote, I am sure——" Luckily, before Mrs. St. Clair could commit herself and Major Waddell's vote, Miss Pratt dashed in—"Ay! Miss Bell Black going to be married to Major Waddell! 'Pon

my word she has fallen upon her feet! That will be a disappointment to many a one, for I assure you the Major's a prize; and I know three ladies he was supposed to be looking after—he even went so far as to present one of them with a very handsome Paradise plume; *that* I know to be a fact, for I was staying in the house at the time, and there was a great debate whether she should have accepted it before he had made his proposals. Ay! I was told that Miss Bell had said lately in a company that she never would marry any man who couldn't give her silver tureens and corners. He's very well connected too. Let me see, his mother was a Bog, and his father a Waddell of the Waddell Mains family; so he has good blood both ways."

All this was very agreeable to Mrs. St. Clair; it was giving consequence to her family, which was an advantage to herself. Miss Pratt's pribble-prabble was therefore music to her ear, and while she gave her whole attention to that, Colonel Delmour contrived to render his conversation no less interesting to her daughter, whose deliberations, like Othello's doubts, were gradually assuming a more decided form. For in love, as in jealousy, it will commonly be found that, "to be once in doubt is once to be resolved."

As the ladies rose from table, Lord Rossville, who had evidently been struggling for some time to give utterance to some exquisite idea, called Miss Pratt, just as she had reached the door. They all stopped.

"Miss Pratt," said his Lordship, making an effort

to subdue any appearance of risibility, "Miss Pratt, I think your friend who received the present of a plume from Major Waddell will have no great cause to plume herself upon that—as, from your account, it can no longer be a feather in her cap."

The Earl was too much elated with this sally to think of Lord Chesterfield, and he indulged himself in a laugh tolerably loud and intolerably long.

"Ha! ha! ha! very good, indeed!" cried Miss Pratt. "I must let Anthony Whyte and Lord Punmedown hear that—very well, indeed! Poor Miss Kitty Fansyflame, as you sây, it will be no great feather in her cap now, poor soul! ha! ha! ha! Lady Betty, did you hear that?" then pinching Gertrude's arm, she whispered, "As Anthony Whyte says, it's a serious matter when Lord Rossville makes a joke—honest man—ha! ha! ha!—very fair, indeed." And Miss Pratt kept up a running laugh all the way to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XV.

"The pilot best of winds does talk,
The peasant of his cattle,
The shepherd of his fleecy flock,
The soldier of his battle."

Ariosto.

The expected dissolution of Parliament was all in favour of the growing attachment of the cousins. Gertrude, indeed, tried, or thought she tried, to avoid receiving the attentions of Colonel Delmour; but in the thousand minute, and almost imperceptible, opportunities which are for ever occurring where people dwell under the same roof, he found many occasions of insinuating the ardour and sincerity of his passion, yet in a manner so refined and unobtrusive that it would have seemed downright prudery to have disclaimed his attentions.

Lord Rossville was, or, what was the same thing, fancied he was, so overwhelmed with business, that, contrary to his usual practice, he now always retired immediately after tea to his study, there to con over the map and count over the roll of the county, and to frame the model of a circular letter which was to surpass all the circular letters that ever had issued from a circular head.

Mrs. St. Clair was busy too; she had begun to canvass with her brother and her uncle, to bespeak their votes, and had written to offer a visit to the latter the following day, by the Earl's desire. Lady Betty sat, as usual, at her little table, with her rug, her novel, and her fat favourite. Miss Pratt gabbled and knotted. Mr. Lyndsay read. Colonel Delmour and Gertrude alone seemed unoccupied, but "how various their employments whom the world deems idle." "You are in an uncommon quiescent state to-night, Delmour," said Mr. Lyndsay, closing his book and rising; "neither music, nor billiards, nor ennui—most wonderful!"

"Etre avec les gens qu'on aime, cela suffit; rever, leur parler, leur parler point, aupres d'eux tout est egal," replied he, casting a look towards Gertrude, but affecting to address Miss Pratt. "Is it not so, Miss Pratt?"

"To tell you the truth, Colonel," answered she with some asperity, "when people speak French to me, I always lay it down as a rule that they're speaking nonsense; I'm sure there's words enough in plain English to say all that anybody has to say."

"Ah! but they are too plain—that is precisely my objection to them; for you, I am sure, are aware," and again he stole a glance at Miss St. Clair, "'combien de choses qu'on n'aperçoit que par sentiment, et dont il est impossible de rendre raison!' Now, the French is the language of sentiment; the English of reason—consequently it is most unreasonable in you, my dear

Miss Pratt, to insist upon my expressing my sentiments in a plain, reasonable manner; but come—since you profess to be insensible to sentiment—try whether you cannot prevail upon Miss St. Clair to give us some music."

"Music!" reiterated Miss Pratt; "fiddlesticks! for any sake let us have one night of peace and rest —for I declare Lord Rossville makes a perfect toil of music; but, indeed, it's the same everywhere now— there's not a house you go into but some of the family are musical. I know one family where there's five grown-up daughters that all play upon the harp, and such a tuning, and stringing, and thrumming goes on that I declare I get perfectly stupid. Not only that, but, as Anthony Whyte says, you used to be aware of your danger when you saw a piano or a fiddle in a house; but now you have music in all shapes, and such contrivances!—there's musical glasses, and musical clocks, and musical snuff-boxes, and now they've got musical work-boxes. The t'other day, when I was at Lady Restall's, I happened to want a thread in a hurry, and was flying to her work-box for it. 'Stop, stop,' says she, 'and I'll give you something better than a thread;' so she locks up her box and sets it a-going, and, to be sure, I thought it never would have done— tune after tune—and 'Isn't that a lovely waltz?' says she, and 'Isn't that a sweet quadrille?' Thinks I, my friend, if you were mine, I would soon stop your mouth, and make you mind your own business."

"But I hope you got your thread?" inquired Lady Betty.

"Yes, yes, I got my thread at last; but isn't it a hard case that one can't get a black silk thread, if it was to save their life, without getting half-a-dozen tunes into the bargain? But that's not the most ridiculous part; for says she, 'I've commissioned a walking-cane for my Lord from Paris' (you know Lord Restall can't walk the length of his toe without a stick), 'and it is to play three waltzes, two quadrilles, a hornpipe, and the Grand Turk's March; it will be such an amusement,' says she, 'when he's walking with his friends, to set his stick a-going.' Thinks I, he'll be clever if ever he sets it a-going about my ears. Miss St. Clair, my dear, have you no nice, nacky, little handy work, that you could be doing at while we sit and chat?"

"That is a proper reproof for my idleness," said Gertrude, rising to fetch her work.

"How I detest the stupid vulgar industry of working ladies," said Colonel Delmour; "come, let me lead you to the music-room;" and he took her hand.

"What are you going to play?" asked Lady Betty.

"Tibbie Fowler," answered Miss Pratt. "Miss St. Clair, my dear, did you ever hear Tibbie Fowler?" and, in her cracked voice, she struck up that celebrated ditty. Colonel Delmour, with an expression of disgust, immediately hurried Miss St. Clair to the adjoining room, leaving Miss Pratt to carol away to Lady Betty and fat Flora.

Much has been said of the powers of music; and all who have ears and souls will admit that its in-

fluence has not been exaggerated even by its most enthusiastic votaries. In every heart of sensibility nature has implanted a chord which, if rightly touched, will yield fine issue, whether to the loftier or the gentler passions of the mind—whether that chord vibrates responsive to the pealing organ, the spirit-stirring drum, or the nightingale's soft lay. Some there are, indeed, to whom music is merely a science, an assemblage of fine concords and discords; and who, possessed of all that skill and knowledge can impart, are yet strangers to those "mystic transports," whose movements are in the soul, and which constitute the true charm of melody. But Colonel Delmour could not be said to belong to either of those classes, or rather, he partook somewhat of both; he was passionately fond of music, and sang with much taste and expression; but, it might be doubted whether his was

"Le chant qui se sent dans l'ame."

Be that as it may, he had hitherto, in the various flirtations in which he had been engaged, found music a most useful auxiliary, and by much the safest, as well as the most elegant, medium for communicating his passion. If the fair one proved propitious, what had been sung could easily be said; if the contrary, whatever her private thoughts might be, she could not accuse him of more than singing a song. It was therefore an invariable rule with Colonel Delmour to use other men's verse, as well as other men's prose, instead of his own. For similar reasons, he also preferred

declaring his passion either in French or Italian; and having read all the lighter works in these languages, and being gifted with a good memory and a ready wit, he was seldom at a loss for expressions suited to each particular case. The words he selected for the present occasion were those beautiful ones—

> "Felice chi vi mira
> Ma peu felice chi per voi sospira," etc.,

when suddenly Miss Pratt burst in with "Wisht! wisht! there's somebody coming that will make us all change our note, I'm thinking;" and while she spoke, a spattered chaise-and-four, with horses in a foam, drove up, which was recognised by its bearings to be that of Mr. Delmour. All was bustle and sensation; the family, with the exception of Lord Rossville, had dropped in one by one to the music-room, where Mr. Delmour was ushered in. He was what many would have called a very fine-looking man—tall and straight, with handsome, regular features, although somewhat resembling Lord Rossville both in person and manners. He paid his compliments rather with the well-bred formality of the old school than with the easy disengaged air of a man of fashion, and totally devoid of that air of *empressement* towards Miss St. Clair which had marked the attentions of his brother from their first meeting. In fact, Mr. Delmour seemed little engrossed with any of the party, but looked round as if in search of a far more interesting object, and then anxiously inquired where Lord Rossville was. But ere an answer could be returned

the Earl himself entered, and mutual pleasure was testified by the uncle and nephew at sight of each other.

"Although, upon ordinary occasions, I confess I am no friend to what are termed unexpected pleasures," said his Lordship; "yet, in the present instance, my dear Robert, I own I do not feel my pleasure at your arrival at all diminished by the unexpectedness of your appearance. At the same time, it would not have been amiss, perhaps, to have apprised me of your intention at this important time."

"Impossible!" replied Mr. Delmour eagerly; "quite impossible! In fact, I set off the instant the House rose, which was on Friday morning at half-past five, after a most interesting debate on the Paper Currency, which, I am happy to tell you, we carried by a majority of eighty-five."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Earl. "And our Road Bill?"

"Is passed; but how stands the county? Have you felt its pulse at all? I understand a brisk canvass has commenced in a certain quarter. I got a hint of that from Lord Wishton, which, in fact induced me to set off without a moment's delay."

"You acted wisely and well," said the Earl; "delays are always dangerous—more especially upon occasions such as the present."

"It's high time you had begun to canvass, if you expect to succeed in your election, I can tell you," interposed Miss Pratt, with one of her sharp, pithy

glances at Colonel Delmour and Gertrude, who kept a little apart; and to judge by the blush and the smile which occasionally flitted over her beautiful features, as she sometimes bent her head to his whispers, the conversation was of rather a more interesting nature than what was carrying on between the uncle and nephew.

Miss Pratt's remark did not hit either of them, and the latter resumed: "I am told the opposite party give out they can already reckon upon twenty-nine votes; that, I suspect, is a *ruse de guerre;* but still it shows the necessity of our taking the field immediately."

"Precisely my own sentiments!" exclaimed Lord Rossville, with delight; "as you justly observe, there is not a moment to lose."

"Something might yet be done to-night," said Mr. Delmour, looking at his watch.

"Something *has* been done already," replied his Lordship, with an air of conscious importance; "but it is now almost supper time, and you must be much fatigued with your long and rapid journey; I must therefore vote for an adjournment."

As the servant at that moment announced supper, this was a very bright sally for the Earl, though it did not produce all the effect he had expected.

"Mr. Delmour, you will conduct Miss St. Clair to the supper room;" and Colonel Delmour, with infinite reluctance, was obliged to relinquish her hand to his brother. With no less unwillingness did she

bestow it, and her chagrin was not lessened at finding herself placed between the uncle and nephew at supper, and condemned to *hear*, without being able to *listen* to their conversation, which now, in spite of Miss Pratt's desultory gabble, continued to flow in the same political channel. Gertrude heard, with weariness, the whole preliminaries of an active canvass fully discussed across her, and while her imagination yet dwelt with delight on the melodious accents and impassioned sentiments which had so lately been poured into her ear, and found entrance to her heart, she mentally exclaimed: "How impossible would it be ever to love a man who can only talk of votes, seats, rolls, and qualifications!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth."
LORD BACON.

"WELL, what do you think of our member?" was Miss Pratt's first salutation to Gertrude, as they met next morning in their way to breakfast; then, without waiting a reply—"I thought you looked very wearied last night, and no wonder, for I declare my back was like to break with their politics. I've a notion you don't think he's likely to be any great acquisition as a member of the family, whatever he may be to the county—He! he! he! I must tell Anthony Whyte that—he will be so diverted;—but come, my dear," taking her arm, "we're too soon for breakfast yet, so we may just scent the morning air, as what do you call the man's ghost says in the play; but you should have something on your head—you must not get that pretty white skin of yours sunburnt; but we'll not go farther than the portico. I looked into the room as I passed, and there was nobody there but Lord Rossville, sitting as usual watching the tea-pot like a clocking-hen. It's a great pity that he will make the tea himself. I declare I'm

like to choke sometimes before I can get a drop, and, after all, it's really just water bewitched. It's a thousand pities, honest man! that he will think he can do everything better than anybody else. But here comes Edward Lyndsay from his walk; I daresay he has been at some good turn already. Good morning, Mr. Edward; where have you been strolling to this fine morning? Miss St. Clair and I are just taking a little chat here, in the sun, till the breakfast's ready; for, as Anthony Whyte says, I don't like to descend to vacuity. What do you think Miss St. Clair says of our member?—That she does not think him any great acquisition as a member of the family, whatever he may be as member for the county; isn't that very good?"

Gertrude was about to disclaim the witticism, when Mr. Lyndsay saved her the trouble.

"So good," replied he, "that I am surprised you should give the credit of it to anybody else. Miss St. Clair, I am sure, is incapable of making such a remark."

"Is that meant as a compliment to you or me, my dear?"—addressing Gertrude. "But I wish you would explain, Mr. Edward; what makes you think Miss St. Clair incapable of saying that?"

"Because, as a physiognomist, I pronounce Miss St. Clair incapable of making so ill-natured a remark upon one of whom she has as yet had no opportunity of forming an opinion."

"And what do you call that remark of your own,

pray, Mr. Edward?" interrupted Miss Pratt, with considerable pique; "for my part, I think it is as ill-natured a one as ever I heard."

"You wished to hear the truth," said he, with a smile; "it is not my fault if it is not agreeable."

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Lindsay, it's not by speaking what you call the truth upon every occasion that people will ever make friends to themselves in this world. I never knew any of your plain-spoken people that didn't make twenty enemies for one friend. I know nobody that likes to have what you call the truth told them; do you, my dear?"—to Gertrude.

"Yes," answered Gertrude; "I think I should like to hear the truth from an amiable person; but the reason it is so disagreeable, I suppose, is because people are always so cross when they speak what they call the truth, that it seems as if they only used it as a cloak for their own ill-humour and caprice, or a thousand other deadly sins."

"Well, I'm sure, if you've a mind to hear the truth you could not be in better hands, my dear, than your cousin's for it. But there's that abominable gong again—we must really fly, for Lord Rossville will be out of all patience;" and off pattered Miss Pratt, leaving her companions to follow her nimble steps. Nobody had yet appeared at the breakfast-table but Lord Rossville and Mr. Delmour, who had resumed the subject of the election with renewed vigour. Miss Pratt, seeing his Lordship so

engrossed, had seized upon the tea-pot, and was enjoying the luxury of filling her cup by stealth. Mr. Lyndsay seated himself by Gertrude; it was the place Colonel Delmour usually occupied, and she looked a little disappointed at seeing it filled by another. He did not appear to notice it, but continued the conversation:—

"I perfectly agree with you in what you were saying of the use or abuse of truth," said he; "but even that is not so dangerous as the delusions of falsehood and flattery, commonly called politeness and admiration."

"These are hard words to give to very agreeable things," answered Gertrude.

"My quarrel is not with the things themselves," said he, "but with their counterfeits."

"Yet, if every one were to tell another exactly what they thought of them, I daresay we should be all scratching each other's eyes out."

"Not if ours was the charity that thinketh no evil."

"Oh! that is to say if we were all angels."

"No; it is to say if we were all Christians." Gertrude stared with some surprise, for her idea of a Christian, like that of many other people's, was, that all were Christians who were born in Christendom, had been baptized, learnt their creeds, and went now and then to church.

"I flatter myself I am a Christian," said she; "and yet I cannot help thinking there are people in the

world who are very tiresome, very impertinent, and very disagreeable; yet I don't think it would be a very Christian act were I to tell them so."

"Certainly not," answered Mr. Lyndsay, with a smile; "you may think them all those things; but if you think of them, at the same time, in the spirit of kindness and Christian benevolence, you will pity their infirmities, and you will have no inclination to hurt their feelings by telling them of faults which you cannot mend."

"But if I were asked—or suppose I were to ask you to tell me my faults?"

"I should certainly endeavour to do it to the best of my ability."

"Well, pray, begin; I should like to have my character drawn in a Christian-like manner," said she, laughing.

"Yes; but I must have many sittings before I can attempt it. I am not one of those nimble artists who can take striking likenesses in five minutes."

"So much the better; for they are always hideous performances; but how long will you take to make a good full-length portrait of me, for I really long to see myself in my true colours—as a mere mortal—not as a goddess?"

"You run no such risk with me, I assure you," said he; "but as to the time, that must depend upon circumstances and opportunities—perhaps in a year."

"A year!" exclaimed Gertrude. "Oh heavens! I

shall die of impatience in a month—to be a whole year of hearing a single fault!"

"I did not say so," replied Mr. Lyndsay; "as errors, like straws, you know, always float on the surface, I shall be able to pick up plenty of them, I have no doubt, very soon—(if I have not got hold of one or two already),—but you would not have me pronounce upon your character from them? Many pearls of great price may lie hid below."

"Which, I'm afraid, you will never discover," said Gertrude, laughing; "so, if my picture is not to be drawn till then, I fear I shall be wrinkled, and old, and ugly, before you have found a single gem to deck me with."

"I hope not," answered he; "you say you love truth and sincerity; these are jewels in themselves, and their light may lead even my darkened eyes (as you seem to think them) to discover more. But to drop metaphor, and speak in plain terms—why, since we both profess to like truth, should we not agree to speak it to each other?"

"With all my heart," answered Gertrude; "but we must settle the preliminaries, draw up the code of laws, and swear to observe them. In the first place, then, we must make a solemn vow, on all occasions to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, *coute qu'il coute;* in the second place, that nothing so said is to give mortal offence to the one party or the other; in the third, that however disagreeable we may think each other, we are to make a point of

declaring it, in the civilest and most Christian-like manner imaginable; in the fourth place——"

"Beware," said Mr. Lyndsay, interrupting her, "of coming under any engagements, since Lord Bacon says, 'It asketh a strong wit and a strong heart to know when to tell the truth;' and you know not what a savage man you have to deal with. No, let it be a discretionary compact, with mutual confidence its only guarantee;" and he held out his hand. Gertrude gave him hers, and as she did so she was struck for the first time with the bland and beautiful expression of his countenance. "I never can fear you," said she, with a smile;—but the conversation was broken off by the entrance of the rest of the family, and the consequent matin greetings that ensued. Colonel Delmour was the last who entered, and a shade of displeasure darkened his brow at finding the seat he considered as exclusively his own occupied by another. Gertrude observed his chagrin, and felt secretly flattered by it. The only vacant seat was one by Miss Pratt, who had hitherto restrained her tongue for the benefit of her ears, both of which had been on the full stretch, the one to pick up certain little political pieces of information, which it had reason to suppose were not intended for it; the other to make itself master of what was going on at the opposite side of the table, betwixt Miss St. Clair and Mr. Lyndsay.

It was wonderful how well these two members contrived to execute their respective offices, though

certainly the chief merit was due to their mistress, who had trained these, her faithful servants, to such perfection in their calling, that each of them, singly, could perform the work, and more than the work, of any ordinary pair of ears in the kingdom. What the industrious ear had collected, the active brain was not long of concocting, nor the nimble tongue of circulating. "You look very grave this morning, Colonel," said she, addressing her neighbour; "I wish you had been here a little sooner, it would have done your heart good to have seen and heard the fine flirtation that's been carrying on over the way"—with a significant nod to the opposite side of the table. "I can tell you, Mr. Edward and a certain fair lady have been looking very sweet upon each other; it's not often he takes a flirting fit, but I'm really glad to see your godly people can be just like their neighbours sometimes, and come as good speed too when they set about it. What do you think?"—lowering her voice—"she's going to sit to him for her picture—a full length, with pearls in her hair; and what do you think?"—still lower—"he's to make her a present of the pearls—I've a notion his mother's, for I know she had a very fine set. He did not seem inclined (to tell the truth) to part with them so soon, for I heard him say something about a year; but, says she, with her pretty winning smile, what's the good of keeping things till one's old, and bald, and toothless, and can't enjoy them? So much for French ease—who would expect that to look at her? But, my gracious!

Colonel, do you see what you've done? spilt your whole cup of coffee upon my good new gown; I wonder how you contrived it!—and you're going to pour the cream upon me next,"—pushing her chair from him with the greatest velocity—"'Pon my word, one would think you did it on purpose."

Colonel Delmour made no attempt to vindicate himself from so foul an insinuation; but, with his shoulder turned to the offended fair, lounged over the *Morning Post*, as if quite unconscious of her presence. But, although he despised her too much to deign to express his disbelief of her communication, he was secretly provoked at the good understanding that seemed to exist between the cousins. He had too high an opinion of himself to have any fear of Lyndsay as a rival; but he had his own private reasons for wishing to have him kept at a distance, at least till he had secured, beyond a doubt, the affections of Miss St. Clair. Besides, he was one of those who disliked all interference with whatever object he chose to appropriate to himself, be it horse, hound, or heart. He therefore determined to put a stop to this growing intimacy, and to seize the first opportunity of bringing matters to an issue.

In the presence of Colonel Delmour and Miss Pratt, it was seldom Mr. Lyndsay had an opportunity of being duly appreciated, for in their company he was generally silent. Not that he had such a respect for their conversation as induced him to play the part of a mere listener; on the contrary, he gave little atten-

tion to either of them; but he was not a person to interrupt, or watch for a pause, or in any way seek to attract the notice of the company. The unobtrusive qualities of his mind, therefore, did not strike upon the fancy with the same glare as the more dazzling characteristics of Colonel Delmour; and where, as in the minute occurrences of domestic life, there are few or no opportunities of displaying the loftier and nobler attributes of mind, it can only be by slow and imperceptible degrees such a character gains upon the affections. A single sentence might have summed up his, in the brief but comprehensive words of an eloquent writer—for of Lyndsay it might truly be said, that "he set an example of all the moral virtues without pride, and dared to be conspicuous for all the Christian graces without false shame."[1]

But Gertrude saw nothing of all this; she saw only that a gloom hung upon Colonel Delmour's brow which she would fain have dispelled; and for that purpose she would have lingered beyond the rest of the party to have given him an opportunity of expressing his disquiet; but she was called away by her mother to prepare for a visit to her uncle, Mr. Adam Ramsay.

[1] Tour to Alet, etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

"He's a terrible man John Tod, John Tod;
He's a terrible man John Tod.
He scolds in the house,
He scolds at the door,
He scolds on the very high road, John Tod;
He scolds on the very high road, John Tod.

"He's weel respeckit, John Tod, John Tod;
He's weel respeckit, John Tod;
Wi' your auld strippit coul,
You look maist like a fule;
But there's nouse in the lining, John Tod, John Tod;
But there's nouse in the lining, John Tod."

Old Song.

THE day was hot even to sultriness, and neither Mrs. St. Clair nor her daughter were inclined to converse beyond a passing remark now and then on the heat, dust, road, sun, etc. Both, indeed, were too agreeably occupied with their own meditations for any interchange of thought. The former was busy revolving how she was to carry uncle Adam and his seventy thousand pounds by a *coup de main;* and, as a preliminary step, had provided herself with a French musical snuff-box and a dozen of embroidered cambric pocket-handkerchiefs. But Mrs. St. Clair little knew the person she had to deal with when she thought to

propitiate him by any such sacrifices. Mr. Adam Ramsay was a man of a fair character, strong understanding, but particular temper, and unpleasing manners—with a good deal of penetration, which (as is too often the case) served no other purpose than to disgust him with his own species. He had left home penniless, at an early period of life, to push his fortune in the world, and after having toiled and broiled for fifty years, he had returned to what was now become a stranger land, laden with wealth, which he had no longer even the wish to enjoy. He felt that he had lived in vain. He had no one to love—no one to share in his possessions; and that only cordial which can give a relish even to the dregs of life was not his: the treasures he had laid up were all of this world; and to a childless, cynical old man, perhaps great wealth is even more galling than great poverty. Yet there were good points in his character, and perhaps, had he been a husband and father, and had his heart been kept alive to the tender charities of life, he might have proved an amiable man, and an agreeable member of society. He possessed strong natural affections, which, though they had lain long dormant, were not yet extinct. It was said that in early youth he had loved and been beloved by one as poor and as friendless, and somewhat lower in degree than himself, and that it was in the hope of gaining affluence for her that he had crossed the seas and sought his fortunes in a foreign land. But many are the disappointments that precede the fulfilment of

our hopes, and many a year rolled on, and found Mr. Ramsay as poor as at the first, till, despairing of ever being able to return and claim his bride, he wrote to release her from her promise of awaiting his return. The fortune at length was made, but too late—the gay dreams of youth were fled for ever! His mistress had married, and was dead; and the sanguine adventurous stripling was grown into the soured, misanthropic old man. Such was the outline of uncle Adam's story, and little more remains to be said of him.

He lived much alone; had all the habits of a recluse, and all the little peculiarities which are supposed to belong to single gentlemen of a certain age. In particular, he had an extreme dislike to receiving those delicate attentions which are sometimes so assiduously rendered to the rich and the childless. Not Timon himself was more tenacious in this respect than uncle Adam, or more disposed to buffet all whom he suspected of a design to prey upon his hoards. The house he now inhabited was one he had taken as a temporary residence on his first arrival; and although he had bought a fine estate with a suitable mansion in the immediate vicinity, and every day had purposed taking possession of it, yet each revolving term found him sitting in the self-same parlour, in the self-same chair, and in the self-same frame of mind. It was at this suburban villa that the handsome equipage of the Earl of Rossville now stopped. It was a small, vulgar, staring red house, with a plot of long bottle-green grass in front, and a narrow border of the

coarsest of flowers (or rather flowering weeds, interspersed with nettles), growing thin and straggling from a green, slimy-looking soil, and covered with dust from the road, from which it was only separated by a railing. Mrs. St. Clair reddened with shame as she marked the contemptuous air with which the consequential footman rapped on the humble door—for bell or knocker there was none. The door was speedily flung open to its farthest extent by a fat, rosy, stamping damsel, in a flaming gown and topknots, who testified the greatest alacrity in doing the honours of the entrance.

"What a habitation for a man with seventy thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, as she entered; but there was no time for pursuing her observations, for she was the next minute in the little parlour of uncle Adam. It was a small close room, with a meridian sun streaming full into it, and calling forth to view myriads of "dancing motes that people the sunbeams," while innumerable hosts of huge flies buzzed and revelled in all the luxury of its heat, and an expiring fire, with its usual concomitants of dust and ashes, seemed fast sinking beneath the influence of the god of day. A small dining-table, and a few haircloth chairs stuck against the walls, comprised the whole furniture of the room. A framed table of weights and measures, an old newspaper, and a parcel of dusty parchments, tied with a red tape, formed its resources and decorations. Altogether it wore the comfortless aspect of a bad inn's worst parlour—a

sort of place where one might pass five minutes while changing horses, but where there was no inducement even for the weary traveller to tarry.

Mr. Ramsay sat by the side of the expiring fire, seemingly contemplating the *gaists* and cinders which lay scattered over the hearth; but he had somewhat the air of a man prepared (rather unwillingly) to receive company. He was above the middle size, with high, stooping shoulders, sharp, cross-looking elbows, projecting far beyond his back, a somewhat stormy blue face, and little pale eyes, surmounted by shaggy white eyebrows. His ordinary headpiece, a striped woollen night-cap, had been laid aside for a capacious powdered peruke with side curls, and a large queue. To complete the whole, he was left-handed, which gave a peculiar awkwardness to his naturally ungainly deportment. He welcomed Mrs. St. Clair with a mixture of cordiality and awkwardness, as if he wished to be kind, but did not know very well how to set about it. She had too much manner, however, to allow him to remain under any embarrassment on that score; and was squeezing uncle Adam's somewhat reluctant hand, and smiling on his rugged visage, and uttering a thousand soft and civil things to his rather averted ear, when suddenly she stopped, for she felt that all was thrown away: her uncle had fixed his eyes on Gertrude, and regarding her with visible emotion, seemed unconscious of every other object.

"Who is that?" at length demanded he, in an agitated voice.

"Pardon me, my dear uncle," replied Mrs. St. Clair; "but, in my happiness at seeing you, I forgot that my daughter was likewise a stranger to you."

"Your daughter!" exclaimed Mr. Ramsay, "it's not possible!"

"Why so, my dear uncle?" asked Mrs. St. Clair, with a smile, and in full expectation of a gallant compliment on her own youthful appearance.

"She's the very picture of ——; but you'll no mind Lizzie Lundie—bonny Lizzie Lundie." He gave a sort of growling sigh, and a pause followed. Visions of former days seemed to crowd into the old man's mind, and he went on as if communing with himself. "I little thought when I parted frae her, fifty year come Martinmas, that I had ta'en my last look o' Lizzie; and as little did I think, when I heard she was gane, that I should ever live to see her like in this warld—no that she just matches Lizzie neither;" and something like a tear gleamed in his eye, as he continued to gaze on the image of his youthful fancy. Gertrude's style of dress was such as helped to heighten the illusion: owing to the heat of the day she had thrown off her bonnet, and the band that confined her hair wore almost the appearance of the *snood* which had been the prevailing fashion for damsels of Lizzie's degree in her day; her throat also was uncovered, and the whole contour of the head was thus displayed at once in all the simplicity of nature, and one more strikingly beautiful could scarcely be conceived.

Confused by the blunt admiration thus expressed for her, Gertrude looked to her mother, and, struck with the deadly paleness of her countenance, she hastily exclaimed, "Mamma, you are ill;" and Mrs. St. Clair, gasping for breath, sank almost lifeless in her daughter's arms. "Air—air," was all she could articulate; and that certainly was the one thing needful in uncle Adam's apartment, for the atmosphere was indeed suffocating. The door and window were instantly thrown open; Gertrude held a glass of water to her mother's pallid lips; and Mr. Ramsay stuffed a bunch of southernwood into her powerless hand. At length these restoratives appeared to produce their effects, and Mrs. St. Clair slowly revived. Due apologies were of course made and accepted; the uncommon heat of the day was much commented on, and the closeness of the room delicately hinted at. Some refreshments, not of the choicest description, were now brought in by the great, awkward, heavy-footed maid-servant. And Mr. Ramsay, taking a glass of wine, drank a welcome to his niece on her return to Scotland, "and to the bonny creature you've brought with you," added he, again fixing his eyes on Gertrude. "After all," continued he, "the thing's not impossible; Lizzie was a relation of ours—a distant one to be sure; let me see—Lizzie's father and my father were cousin-germains' bairns; but that'll no do, for it's by the other side o' the hooss—it was by my father."

Mrs. St. Clair's colour rose to the deepest crimson, and she seemed struggling to subdue her feelings. At

length, making an effort at self-control, she said, with affected pleasantry: "I have no doubt my daughter has great reason to be flattered at the resemblance you have discovered for her; but, my dear uncle, you know there are certain prejudices—certain notions that some people entertain—in short, the thing to be talked of amongst ourselves is very well; and it is very flattering to me that my daughter's looks should afford you pleasure—but I own I——I should be sorry—I would rather that a report of such a resemblance were not to reach the Rossville family; they now consider my daughter as one of themselves; and their pride might be hurt, you know, and a prejudice created, that might prove highly detrimental to Gertrude's best interests."

"Set them up with their pride!" cried Mr. Ramsay—all softer emotions giving way to indignation; "their pride hurt, indeed, at being compared to Lizzie Lundie! There's no a Rossville or a St. Clair among them that e'er I saw was fit to tie Lizzie Lundie's shoe—the Queen upon the throne might have thought it an honour to be compared to Lizzie;"—and the little chamber seemed as though it would not contain him in his wrath, as he paced up and down its narrow bounds, with his hands crossed behind his back: all shyness and embarrassment had vanished in this burst of passion, and uncle Adam stood revealed in his own character. Then suddenly stopping—"And what would ha'e come o' ye if Lizzie Lundie had been what I ance thought she would ha'e

been—my wedded wife? What would your Rossvilles ha'e done then? Would you ha'e thought it a disgrace then, that your daughter should ha'e been likened to your uncle's wife?"

"Oh! this is too much!" exclaimed Mrs. St Clair, bursting into tears.

"What's too much?" cried he, continuing to walk up and down in great discomposure. Then suddenly stopping, and softening at sight of his niece's distress —"Come, come; what's a' this for?—wae's me, ye ha'e suffered little in the warld, if the hasty word o' an auld man can set ye off this way; ye'll ken me better by-and-bye than to mind a' that I say;"—then patting Gertrude on the shoulder, as she hung over her mother—"It's you that has made us cast out, and it's you that maun make us 'gree."

Gertrude took her mother's hand, and put it in her uncle's; he took it kindly, and Mrs. St Clair, as soon as she found voice, said: "Excuse me, my dear uncle, I am ashamed of my weakness; but my nerves are now so shattered, and my spirits are not what they once were. I have a difficult part to play, and it is not surprising if—— In short, dependent as I am on the relations of my child—and that dear child's interest so much at stake too—you cannot wonder if I am sometimes driven—if I sometimes stoop—if I should sometimes tremble——"

Mrs. St Clair seemed at a loss to finish, but her uncle saved her the trouble—"Ay, ay, you have a proud thrawn pack to deal wi', I believe."

"Then you understand, my dear uncle, the reason of my wishing that——"

"Ay, ay—ye needna be feared for me; but I maun aye think the likeness maist wonderful—most wonderful—most wonderful," repeated he two or three times, as he contemplated, and severally enumerated every feature, summing up the whole with—"Since I saw Lizzie Lundie I've never seen the woman that I thought worth the looking at till now." At that moment a smart female figure, feathered and furbelowed, entered the little yard, and approached the house. "There's ane o' the fule tribe," cried he; "my bonny niece, Miss Bell Black. I ne'er see that craatur that I dinna wish myself blind, and deaf, and doited." And thereupon entered Miss Bell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"He had a sowre behaviour, and a tongue immoderately free and full of taunting."—LIVY.

"WHAT'S brought you here, Miss Bell?" was his salutation on entering; but nowise daunted with what, indeed, she was well accustomed to, she boldly shook hands with all around, and then showing a small basket—"I have brought you some very fine strawberries, uncle; they are the first we have had in our garden; and I assure you I have had much ado to keep them from the children for you;"—and with a consequential air, she disclosed some dozen or two of very so-so looking strawberries.

"You had very little to do, then," said Mr. Ramsay. "I wadna gi'e a bawbee for a' the berries in your garden; so ye may just tak' them back to whar ye brought them frae; or stay, since ye ha'e robbed your brithers and sisters o' them, puir things, there's a barber's bairn twa doors aff that wad maybe be glad o' them—it's lying in the mizzles."

"'Pon my word, uncle," said Miss Bell in great indignation, "I have something else to do than to pick strawberries for barber's brats, indeed." But uncle Adam, going to the door, called the maid, and

giving her the strawberries, directed her to "carry the berries to Rob Rattray's bairn, and to ask how he was." Miss Bell prudently turned a deaf ear to the message, and was apologising with all her powers of eloquence to Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter for not having been to visit them. "But the truth is," said she, with a well got-up air of modesty, "that, in my situation, visiting is out of the question. If I were to go to one place I should have to go everywhere, and the Major has so many connections in the county, who, of course, would expect me to come to them, that it would be extremely unpleasant, in my situation, where the thing is so well known. This, I assure you, is the only place I ever go to, as I think it a positive duty"—(lowering her voice)—"to pay attention to my uncle, poor man, and I am the only one of the family who understands his ways, and can manage him." Mr. Ramsay having for the moment appeased the antipathy he bore his niece by the insult he had offered her, was now restored to something like good-humour. "Weel, Miss Bell," said he, "what have you made of your nawbob—your swain—your loveyer—your what-do-ye-call-him?"

"If you mean the Major," said Miss Bell with dignity, "he walked into town with me, and is gone to look at a pair of carriage-horses that are for sale at the White Bear just now; I suppose he will be here in a little;"—then drawing back from the window with a face of alarm, as a carriage passed—

"I really wish, uncle, if you mean to remain here,

you wonld get a blind for your window, for everybody is seen in this room, and in my situation, it is not very pleasant, I assure you, to be exposed to everybody that passes;—that was the Boghall carriage that passed just now, and they must think it very odd to have seen me sitting here when I declined an invitation to dinner there for to-morrow, upon the plea that I went nowhere at present."

"Then what brings you here, if you're no fit to be seen?" demanded uncle Adam in a most wrathful accent.

"I must confess, my dear uncle," said Mrs. St. Clair, glad of an opening for expressing her sentiments, and, at the same time, softening the tone of the conversation, "this house does not seem quite suitable for you."

"What ails the house?" asked he sharply.

"I beg pardon, I understood (perhaps I was misinformed) that you were the proprietor of a charming place in this neighbourhood."

"Weel?" This was put in so startling a manner, that Mrs. St. Clair's courage failed her, and she feared to reply;—not so Miss Bell.

"Well! to think of anybody in their senses living in this little, vulgar, shabby hole, when they have such a house as Bloom Park standing empty. I assure you, uncle, it has a very odd appearance in the eyes of the world."

"Miss Bell Black, you that's such a wise, sensible, weel-informed woman, that ken's awthing, will you

just ha'e the goodness to tell me what are the eyes of the warld, and whar do they stand? For muckle I ha'e heard of the eyes o' the warld, but I ha'e never been able to see them yet;" and Mr. Ramsay fixed his upon her, while he advanced his face almost close to her, and put his hands on his knees, in a manner that seemed to say, "Answer me this before you stir."

Miss Bell hesitated a little. "Why, I can only tell you, uncle, that Lord Fairacre was quite confounded when the Major told him you had never taken possession of Bloom Park yet, and said it was most extraordinary that you should continue to live in a house that was hardly good enough for a dog-kennel; and Boghall, who was present, said he did not believe the whole house was the size of his kitchen; and the Major himself I know thinks——"

"And so these are the eyes of the world!" cried Mr. Ramsay, with a sort of growling, sardonic laugh; "pretty eyes they are, to be sure, to drive a man out of his ain house!—The tane a poor silly spendthrift, the t'ither a great gormandising swash, and the third —but how comes the warld to have but three eyes? —can you no mak' out a fourth? I beg your pardon, I suppose your ain was to be the fourth, and that mak's a' right, for then ye can gi'e the warld twa faces: Fairacre's and Boghall on the tae face, Major Waddell and Miss Bell Black on the t'ither;"—then in a lower key, and muttering to himself, "Spendthrifts and ne'erdoweels on the tae side; fules and tawpies on the t'ither—a true picture o' the warld."

Any other than Miss Bell would certainly have *given in* here; but Miss Bell was one of those gifted mortals who are quite invulnerable to the shafts of envy, hatred, or malice, when it is their interest to be so; and though she did look a little hot and disconcerted for a few minutes, she quickly rallied, and resumed—

"I assure you, uncle, whatever you may think, the opinion of the world is not to be despised."

"Miss Bell Black, I have lived rather longer in the world than you have done, and I've seen rather mair o't than you're ever likely to see; and I would nae gi'e that," snapping his fingers, "for either it's gude word or it's ill; it canna say that ever I oppressed them that were beneath me,—or cringed to them that were aboon me,—or that I ever wranged ony creature o' a bodle,—or that I ever said the thing I didna think; and if either you or you're warld think I'm to be dictated to in my ain house, you're much mistaken."

"Well, uncle, I can only say I think it is a great pity that so fine a place as Bloom Park should be standing empty; and since you seem resolved not to live at it yourself, there's many a one, I assure you, would be glad to take it off your hands. The Major has been looking at Elm Grove; but I think there is no comparison between Bloom Park and it."

"What then?" demanded Mr. Ramsay.

"Oh, nothing. Only if you had any thoughts of letting it, it is such a paradise, that——"

"I could be at nae loss for an Adam and Eve to

put in it," interrupted her uncle; "your nawbob and you for instance"—with a growling grin;—"but I can tell you ye'll no play your gambols there if I can help it."

Miss Bell looked very indignant as she replied: "As to that, the Major cares very little about the matter; if I am pleased, that is all he is anxious about, and the rent is no object; but I find it very difficult to get a place to suit us in every respect—but here is the Major himself,"—and the Major was presently ushered in. Mr. Ramsay received him with tolerable civility, and Mrs. St. Clair, desirous of receiving his vote at the approaching election, was preparing the way by a soft speech about nothing. But Miss Bell never permitted the Major to speak to, or look at, or listen to anybody else when she was present, and she therefore called him off with—"Well, Major, did you see the carriage-horses, and what do you think of them?"

"They seem good serviceable horses—not particularly handsome," replied he.

"What colour?"—I'll thank you for a glass of water, Major."

"Pray, allow me to put a little wine in it."

"The least drop—and you think they will do?—Oh! not so much."

"That is not for me to decide," replied the Major, with a bow—which was graciously acknowledged with a smile. "Perhaps you will take a look of them yourself?"

"Why, in my situation,"—in a modest key—"I hardly think I should like to go to the White Bear—Major, will you take this glass?".

"But I shall desire the ostler to bring them up here, 'tis but a step from the stables——"

"I'm for none of your horses brought to my door," cried Mr. Ramsay; "it will be through the town I'm setting up my chaise next, and a bonny hullybaloo there'll be," and he paced the room in great perturbation at the bare supposition of such a thing.

"My dear sir——" began the Major, but he was cut short with—

"Now I'm for none of your horses at my door."

"Bless me, uncle!" cried Miss Bell, "I think you may be very well pleased to get the credit of a carriage at such an easy rate."

"Great credit, to be sure! to get the credit of being an auld ostentatious fule."

"Such nonsense, uncle!—at anyrate, I thought you did not care what the world said of you."

"You thought!" repeated uncle Adam, with the most sovereign contempt; "and what entitles you to think?—but ye need sae nae mair aboot it—there's to be nae horses brought to my door. If ye maun ha'e horses ye maun gang to the horse-market for them, like other folk; I'm no to ha'e my house turned into a White Bear."

"My dear sir——" said the Major.

"In my situation"—interrupted Miss Bell,—"it would have a very odd appearance in the eyes of the

world——" But here Mrs. St. Clair interposed, by offering to *chaperon* her niece to the White Bear in Lord Rossville's carriage, hoping to be repaid for this civility by securing the Major's vote. The offer, after a little affected demur, was accepted, and the Major was despatched to have the horses in readiness.

"I really think, uncle, you might dispense with a fire now," remarked Miss Bell, as she rose to depart.

"Do ye ken naething else I could dispense wi'?" demanded Mr. Ramsay, with a look and emphasis that might have made a tortoise fly; not so Miss Bell, who still lingered in the desperate hope of showing her consequence, and proving her influence over uncle Adam and his seventy thousand pounds.

"Well, uncle, when are we to see you at Bellevue?"

"I would prefer my claim for a visit," said Mrs. St. Clair, with her most winning smile; "but Lord Rossville intends himself to have the pleasure of calling upon you, and——"

"In hopes of getting my vote," interrupted Mr. Ramsay, impatiently; "but he may just save himself the trouble—I'm no gaun to be hunted out o' my senses by your election hounds. I'll gi'e my vote to wha I like, or maybe I'll keep it to mysel'; but there's ae thing I can tell you, it's no to be had for the asking."

Mrs. St. Clair prudently received this rebuff in silence; but Miss Bell plucked up fresh spirit at witnessing another's discomfiture, and taking her uncle

by the breast of the coat, and drawing him back, she began in an undertone of voice, as if desirous of not being overheard,—

"By-the-bye, uncle, talking of votes, there's one thing that I feel very anxious about, and that is, that the Major and you should concert something together as to your votes; it would be extremely awkward, I think, if you were to take different sides, and have a very odd appearance in the eyes of the world."

Whatever uncle Adam's thoughts might be, his looks portended a storm ready to burst forth; but as Gertrude turned towards him to wish him good morning, his features relaxed, and his frown gradually softened into something like a smile.

"The eyes of the world!" repeated he; "I would na gi'e a glisk of thae bonny een of yours for aw the eyes o' the world put thegither,—and dinna you, my dear, let the eyes o' the world scare you, as they ha'e done mony a ane, frae your ain happiness. Now, fare ye weel, my dawtie," patting her shoulder, "an' I'll say to you what I wadna say to mony—I'll aye be glad to see you, come when ye like—fare ye weel. Gude morning to you, Miss Bell; and ye may tak' the eyes o' the world on your back, and muckle gude may they do ye;"—and with a laugh of derision, uncle Adam saw his visitors drive off, and returned to his little dusty, sunny parlour, elate with the triumph of having defied the world and its eyes.

But before parting with Mr. Ramsay, we must here observe that he is not the only one who has attempted

to walk as if uncontrolled by the scan of that dread power, commonly called the eyes of the world. Few, if any, however, have ever arrived at entire emancipation from its influence, which extends more or less over all mankind. Uncle Adam flattered himself that he was one of the happy few who had escaped from its thraldom; but, alas! poor man, its yoke was still upon him, and, unconscious of his chains, he hugged himself in his freedom. He cared not, indeed, that the world should call him a miser; he cared not that the world should call him a churl; he cared not that the world should call him odd; he cared not that the world should say he lived in a mean house, or wore a shabby hat, or an old-fashioned wig; but he cared lest the world should think he cared for the world—or should say that he was vain, or proud, or ostentatious, or expensive; and it was this which made him often deny himself many a little comfort, many a harmless gratification, many an innocent desire he had in common with that world he so much despised. To be free from the eyes of the world has been the aim of many, but the attainment of few. Man is not born to be free, and when all restraint is laid aside, the wickedness of the human heart displays itself in the most hideous forms. 'Tis to the Christian alone that such freedom belongs, and he only can say, "*Je crains Dieu et n'ai point d'autre crainte.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

"A merry going out often bringeth a mournful return; and a joyful morning a sad evening."—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

DURING their progress to the White Bear, Miss Bell indemnified herself for the mortifications she had received from her uncle by expressing herself in terms of the greatest pity and contempt for him.

"Poor man!" said she, "I really feel for him,—for you must know it is alleged I am his great favourite; and when that is the case, of course one will put up with a great deal. Indeed, for my part, I know his temper so well I never should think of being affronted at anything he could say; but I own I am sometimes afraid of the Major—a man of his rank is not to be tampered with; and he has such a high spirit there is no saying how he might resent anything the least like disrespect to me, though I know my poor uncle is far from meaning anything of the kind. It is entirely his manner, for I have been told he speaks very handsomely of me behind my back; and when that is the case, one should not mind what is said to their face. However, in my situation, it is certainly not pleasant, and when I am a married woman, the thing must be put a stop to."

Here Mrs. St. Clair put a stop to that subject by introducing the one uppermost in her thoughts, that of the election, and requesting her niece to use her influence with her lover on the occasion. But Miss Bell, like all fools, had her share of cunning, as well as of consequence; and she was aware that the more doubts and difficulties she could attach to the Major's vote, the more the Major's importance and her own importance would be increased; and she therefore made answer,—

"Why, really aunt, to tell you the truth, the Major has a very difficult part to act; and it will require no small management, I assure you, both in him and me, to avoid giving offence to one side or the other. Connected as he is with the Fairacre and Boghall families, it will be a strong step in him to give his vote to the opposite party. At the same time, I know I have only to say the word to secure him for my friends; but, as I said to him, the world might reflect upon me, were I to make use of my influence in so important a matter. Besides, you know, aunt, I can say nothing till the Major has been waited upon by Lord Rossville, and has been paid proper attention to by the family; and it would also be right, I think, if some of the ladies were to be introduced to his sister, Mrs. Fairbairn, a very sweet woman, who lives a little way from this." But here the carriage drove up to the White Bear, where neither the Major nor the horses were to be seen; but they were told both would be forthcoming

presently. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to wait patiently in the midst of the usual assemblage that is to be seen lounging at an inn door—hostlers, drivers, stable-boys, beggars, waiters, travellers, etc. etc. etc.

"This is very unpleasant," said Miss Bell. "I wonder how the Major could think of exposing a person in my situation in this manner. I am sure I would rather have gone without carriage-horses than have had all these people's eyes upon me. There is one man, I declare he stares in such a manner I don't know where to look; I wonder what he means! I really wish he would bestow his attention on somebody else;—but, perhaps, cousin, he's one of your French beaux?"

Mrs. St. Clair and Gertrude both looked in the direction pointed out by Miss Bell, and both were struck by the appearance of the person in question, or rather by the earnest scrutinising look with which he regarded the party; for, although handsome, there was nothing very striking either in his dress or figure —nothing that was even indicative of the station to which he might be supposed to belong. He was a man seemingly turned of thirty, but might be more, with fair but sunburnt complexion, light hair, handsome, though rather hawk nose, and keen bright blue eyes. Taken singly, his features had no peculiarity in them; but there was something in the general expression of the countenance of rather a marked and unpleasing character.

"I have surely seen that face before," said Mrs. St. Clair, endeavouring to recollect when and where.

"I'm sure he won't forget some of ours," said Miss Bell; "for I really never saw anything so impudent as the manner in which he stares; and such a shabby-looking creature, all covered with dust! I daresay he is just off the top of some coach; I'm sure if the Major catches him staring so impudently at me—— but here comes the Major and the carriage-horses—don't they look very well?" and then ensued a colloquy between the lovers.

"How do you like your steeds, Isabella?"

"Not mine, Major—you know I have nothing to do with them; but what do you think of them yourself?"

"My thoughts must be guided entirely by your taste."

"Very gallant, indeed!"—and so forth in the usual style of some such silly pair.

The stranger all the while kept his station, after asking a question of one of the servants; but his looks, which, at first, had wandered from one or other of the party, finally rested on Gertrude, with an expression which it was impossible to comprehend or define. It was neither admiration, nor curiosity, nor pleasure, nor any of the common emotions which a stranger might be supposed to entertain, but his countenance assumed a sort of smile of exultation no less strange than offensive. In some displeasure at so rude and persevering a gaze, Gertrude raised her

hand to pull down the blind, when, suddenly springing forward, he laid his hand on the door of the carriage.

"What insolence!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair. The stranger looked at her for a moment, with a bitter, contemptuous smile, then said—

"I would speak with you, madam."

"Speak, then—say what is your business?" answered she somewhat impatiently.

"You would not wish me to declare it in the presence of these ladies, I am sure," replied the man, with a still more familiar look and manner. Miss Bell's body and soul were both half out of the opposite side of the carriage, as she leaned over communing with the Major. Mrs. St. Clair therefore answered haughtily—

"You can have nothing to say to me that my daughter may not hear."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger in an ironical tone; "is she then——" Mrs. St. Clair involuntarily bent her head towards him, and the rest of the sentence was whispered in her ear, when, uttering a half-stifled shriek, she sank back, pale, trembling, and convulsed.

"What's the matter?" cried Miss Bell, turning round.

"Mamma has been frightened by that strange-looking man," answered Gertrude, in a low voice.

"Bless me!" cried Miss Bell, "such nonsense—to be frightened for any man when the Major is here;"

—then in a loud key—"Major, I wish you would ask that person what he wants?"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, suddenly starting up in the most extreme agitation—"I know him—I have seen him before—I—I must speak to him myself," gasped she, as she motioned to have the carriage door opened.

"Oh mamma!" cried Gertrude, taking her mother's trembling hand to detain her—"you are unable—allow me;" but her mother seemed not to hear her, as, with the assistance of the servants, she alighted, and, with an unsteady step, drew near the stranger, who had withdrawn a few paces from the carriage, apart from the bystanders.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Bell, in a whisper to Gertrude; "I see my aunt is terrified at the thoughts of involving the Major with that man, and, to be sure, if he had only seen how he stared at me, I daresay he would have knocked him down, so it's better she should speak to him herself, as I am under her protection at present, you know."

Gertrude made no reply, and Miss Bell, too much interested in her carriage-horses to bestow her attention on any mere human concerns, quickly returned to the discussion of hoofs, tails, manes, etc. Mrs. St. Clair, meanwhile, having exchanged a few words with the stranger, returned to the carriage, still bearing visible signs of great mental disquiet.

"So, aunt, you have very soon disposed of your beau," began Miss Bell, no less deficient in common observa-

tion than in delicacy. "Dear me, are we driving away, and nothing settled about the carriage-horses yet; and where's the Major? Major! Major! stop, driver, for the Major; and presently the Major's willow-green visage presented itself, panting with the exertion of running after the carriage.

"I can make nothing of that fellow," said he, addressing Mrs. St. Clair; "he seems a most confounded insolent dog. If I had been a justice of the peace I should certainly have committed him."

"I think you would have done quite right," said Miss Bell; "and I really think, aunt, you were a great deal too soft with him. What did he say to you, Major?"

"Oh, he was confoundedly impertinent, and if I had had my bamboo I should certainly have laid it across his shoulders."

"Well, I dare say it was better that you got out to speak to him yourself than that the Major should have taken him in hand; but he would have deserved it," said Miss Bell, "if it had only been for his impudence in staring at me in the manner he did—but, by-the-bye, did not you say you knew him, aunt?"

Mrs. St. Clair's colour had undergone many variations during this conversation, and Gertrude thought she read torture in every feature and lineament of her countenance. But in a voice which she vainly tried to render firm and composed, she replied, "I have seen him before, only once, and that under circumstances of distress in my husband's——" Here her

emotion choked her utterance, and Miss Bell and the Major, who were no nice observers, ascribed her agitation to the only legitimate source of a widow's tears, the remembrance of her departed lord; and not being at all in a mood to sympathise in any such sorrowful feelings, Miss Bell proposed to alight and walk home with her lover, which was readily acceded to by her aunt. "I trust I shall soon have the pleasure of presenting Mrs. Waddell to you," said the Major in a half whisper to Mrs. St. Clair.

"Upon my word, Major, you are too bad," said his fair, affecting to turn away in displeasure.

"Have you bespoke your cousin's good offices on the occasion, my love?" asked the inamorato, in still softer accents.

"No—I really, Major—you know there is no hurry——"

"I beg your pardon—I know just the reverse," replied the gallant Major; but Mrs. St. Clair, sick of their vulgar airs, here wished the happy pair good morning; and making a sign to the servant, the carriage bounded away, leaving them far behind. Gertrude naturally expected that her mother would now give some explanation of the strange mysterious scene that had taken place, though she had too much delicacy to express any curiosity on the subject; but Mrs. St. Clair remained silent and abstracted during the whole drive, and was only roused from her musings by the sudden stopping of the carriage, as it drew up at the castle.

"Home already!" exclaimed she, looking round as if awakened from a dream; then, in a languid oppressed voice, "Gertrude, I am ill—but I want no attentions," waving her off; "they can do me no good." Colonel Delmour, who had been lounging on the lawn with his dogs, was now hastening towards them. "Gertrude," continued she, grasping her daughter's hand,—"be silent on the events of this day, as you value my *life*." Gertrude shuddered, but the next moment her hand was pressed in that of Colonel Delmour, as he assisted her to alight, and her mother's fearful words were almost driven from her thoughts by the raptures he expressed at her return. His words were too delightful not to be listened to, and she loitered a few minutes on the steps. "Is it possible," thought she, as she looked on her lover, "that this elegant, graceful being can belong to the same species with an uncle Adam or a Major Waddell!" Colonel Delmour saw that he had lost nothing by her absence, and as her mother turned to call her, he ventured to whisper somewhat of a more serious import than he had yet done;—Gertrude blushed, smiled, and was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

"What silence hides, that knowest thou."

DANTE.

ON joining her mother in her apartment, Gertrude found her walking to and fro in that manner which plainly indicates great mental disquiet. She continued to pace backwards and forwards for some time, as if lost in thought; then suddenly stopping, she said, somewhat abruptly—"Gertrude, do you remember your nurse?"

"Ah! mamma, can I ever forget her!" replied her daughter, tears springing to her eyes at the remembrance of all the care and tenderness she had experienced for years from the faithful creature.

"Yes, I know you were very fond of her, and she of you. Well, the stranger who caused me so great an alarm to-day—was her husband."

"Her husband, mamma!" repeated Gertrude. "I thought he had been dead many years ago?"

"I thought so too; but unfortunately it is not so —I say unfortunately, for he is likely to prove a troublesome appendage to us—those sort of people are always unreasonable; and he seems to think his wife's care and attention to you, and her long services in the

family, give him a claim upon our gratitude, which I fear I shall not find easy to answer. In short, he seems a needy, rapacious man, urgent for money, which I have not to give, and yet am loth to refuse."

"It is certainly my duty to do something for him, mamma," answered her daughter; "but, you know, I have nothing in my own power—all I can do is to speak to my uncle for him——"

"No, no," cried Mrs. St. Clair impatiently, "that will never do;" and she resumed her pacing up and down.

"Why may I not ask Lord Rossville to assist him, mamma?" inquired Gertrude, in some surprise. "Surely the husband of my nurse, of one whom I loved so dearly, has a right to expect something from us?"

"Something—yes, something; but what is that something to be? How much money have you got at present, Gertrude?"

Her daughter named the sum, which was a very trifling one. "Good heavens! what shall I do?" exclaimed her mother, with the look and accent of despair; "how shall I ever be able a raise a sufficient sum——"

"Dear mamma! why should you distress yourself so much about it?—only suffer me to speak to my uncle."

"Gertrude, you will drive me mad! have I not told you that it would be destruction to me to breathe a syllable of this matter to any human being?"

"Destruction, mamma!" repeated her daughter in

astonishment, not unmixed with terror at her mother's vehemence.

"Bring me what money you have—every *sous*, and no questions; you will perhaps know all soon enough," murmured she, throwing herself into a chair, as if exhausted with the violence of contending emotions; then rousing herself as her daughter was leaving the room to obey her,—"and fetch me your ornaments, Gertrude—all of them—quick, no more words;"—and she waved her hand impatiently for her to be gone. Gertrude was too well acquainted with her mother's imperious manner to attempt any remonstrance, but she could not conceal the astonishment and reluctance with which she set about obeying her. Having collected all the money and the few jewels she possessed, she brought them to her mother.

"Surely, mamma," said she, "it cannot be necessary for me to give my ear-rings and bracelets to my nurse's husband! The money he is welcome to; but really I am churlish enough to grudge him my trinkets."

"Keep them, then," said Mrs. St. Clair, pushing them from her with contempt—"keep the paltry baubles, since it is too great a sacrifice to part with them even to a parent."

"Oh, mamma, what cruel words! I spoke in jest—take them—take all—everything that I have;" and she drew the rings off her fingers, and unclasped those in her ears.

"No, no," said her mother, in the same cold, bitter

tone, "keep your precious gewgaws—you surely would not give your pearl necklace to save me from ruin?—that would be too much, indeed!"

Mrs. St. Clair well knew how to turn to her own purposes the quick generous temper of her daughter.

Stung to the soul by her mother's reproaches, Gertrude burst into tears; she besought her forgiveness—she implored her to take the baubles, till at length she prevailed, and what Gertrude would, in other circumstances, have considered a sacrifice, she now looked upon as a privilege; so differently do things appear according to the state of our minds.

"To show that I do not exact more from you than I do from myself," said Mrs. St. Clair, going to her jewel-case, "I too must part with all I possess;" and she took out all her own ornaments, and began putting them up along with those of her daughter. Gertrude assisted with a good grace, for she was still in a state of excitement. She saw all her elegant and fashionable *bijouterie*—all the cherished tokens of remembrance—all the little gifts she had received from far distant friends and companions, one by one, folded up, and she still felt only joy in the thought that she had parted with them for her mother; but she could not suppress a sigh when she came to an old-fashioned hair-brooch, in the form of a heart, set round with garnets—"That was the gift of my dear nurse," said she timidly, "and she made me promise that I never——"

"Would part with it," subjoined Mrs. St. Clair.

"Well, keep your promise and your locket, Gertrude, it is of little value—it can make no difference; surely he would not grudge you that."

"He!" repeated Gertrude indignantly—"it is not for him, it is for you—but why?"—she stopped, and looked inquiringly in her mother's face.

"Gertrude, it is natural that your curiosity should be excited by what you have seen and heard, and the time may come—perhaps too soon, when it will be amply gratified; but when it is, I tell you that it will—it must be at the expense of my life. Now speak, ask what you will, and I will answer you, but it *must* be on these terms."

"Oh! mamma, what a wretch you must think me," said Gertrude, again giving way to her tears—"head-strong, perverse, disobedient, you may have found me, but surely I do not deserve such killing words. Would that I could share in your distresses, whatever they are, if by sharing I could lessen them."

Mrs. St. Clair shook her head, and sighed deeply. "I believe you, Gertrude—I know you are superior to the meanness of mere curiosity, and I think I may rely on your affection—may I not?"

Her daughter answered by throwing herself into her mother's arms, and Mrs. St. Clair pressed her to her bosom with emotions of tenderness and affection, such as she had never before displayed. When she regained her composure, she said—

"Now, my love, we understand each other; you are aware that my reserve proceeds from no distrust

of you. I feel that your forbearance is the result of your affection for me; henceforth all that you have to do is to prove your sincerity by your silence. You have only to promise that you will never disclose what you have witnessed, or what you *may* yet witness, in my conduct that may seem strange and mysterious, and that you will never reveal what I have now told you about that man; neither his name, nor his connection with us, must you ever breathe, as you value my life."

Gertrude promised—solemnly promised, and her mother again tenderly embraced her, declaring herself satisfied.

"You know not what a load it takes from my mind to find you thus prudent, tractable, and confiding, with feeling enough to participate in my vexations, with delicacy to repress all idle curiosity, with affection to assist me in my difficulties. May Heaven reward you, Gertrude, for all you have done and will do for me! And now," continued she, as she finished the packet she had been making up, "I am going to give you yet a stronger proof of the trust I place in you. This packet must be delivered to-night to the person for whom it is destined. I have promised to meet him at the temple, near the end of the lime avenue, next the deer-park, at eleven o'clock, and you must accompany me; the family will then be at supper; I shall plead a headache—alas! no vain pretext!"—and she pressed her daughter's hand to her throbbing temples—"as an excuse for

retiring to my room; you will of course attend me, and we shall then find no difficulty in stealing out unperceived. I know all you would say, Gertrude," continued she in a quick, impatient tone, as she read her daughter's disapprobation in the glow that mantled on her cheek; "but there is no alternative—it *must* be so; yet if you repent your promise, I am ready to release you from it, though my ruin should ensue. Speak, do you wish to be free?"

Gertrude could not speak, but she gave her mother her hand in token of her submission, then turned shuddering away. Her mother again caressed her.

"Be composed, my love—all will yet go well. Let us dress for dinner," continued she, as her maid entered for the purpose of preparing her toilet. Then whispering, "Try to look cheerful, my love; remember looks may betray a secret as well as words; put some flowers in your hair, and make yourself at least *look* gay for my sake—do, my sweetest!"

Gertrude sighed, and they separated.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Plus sonat quam valet."
"More sound than sense."
SENECA.

It would have argued ill for Gertrude if she could have obeyed her mother's injunctions, and looked the thing she was not. Time and suffering may teach us to repress our feelings; but the young and untried heart can with difficulty learn to conceal them. The most ingenuous and upright mind may practise self-control; but it is only the artful and the mean who will ever stoop to dissimulation. Agitated and perplexed, in vain she strove to appear tranquil and disengaged—the very attempt served only to defeat the purpose. The more she thought of her mother's strange mysterious behaviour—and of what else could she think?—the more bewildered she became in the maze of her own fancy; till at length, despairing of regaining self-possession from her own secret communings, she hastened to seek it in company, and quickly dressing herself, she descended to the drawing-room.

It required no great share of penetration to discover that something more than common was passing in

her mind; her varying colour, her clouded brow, her thoughtful yet wandering eye, so different from the usual open, bland expression of her countenance, plainly indicated the state of her feelings.

Lord Rossville, Mr. Delmour, and Mrs. St. Clair were at the farther end of the room in earnest conversation. She was giving such an account of her visit to Mr. Ramsay, and her meeting with Major Waddell, as suited her own purposes; and she dilated so much upon the difficulties and importance of their votes, and the management that would be requisite to secure them, that she at last succeeded (no very difficult matter) in completely mistifying, at least, one of her auditors. In short, she convinced Lord Rossville, and almost persuaded his nephew, that the whole issue of the election depended on her and her family.

"I have a strange headstrong set of beings to deal with," said she; "but I think, with a little address and a good deal attention, we shall prevail at last."

"On such an occasion," said his Lordship, "neither ought to be wanting, my dear madam. I flatter myself we are none of us deficient in the former qualification, and the latter depends entirely upon ourselves. To-morrow Mr. Delmour and I shall make a point of waiting upon such of your relatives and connections as"—Mr. Delmour here took out his memorandum book, and began to write down the names of Major Waddell, Mr. Ramsay, and Mr. Black in his list for the following day. "I wish we could secure your uncle," said he to Mrs. St. Clair;—then turning to Lord Ross-

ville—"I find he is the purchaser of the superiorities of Deafknows, which, with Tonglands and Kilspindie, might, with ease, be split certainly into four; but I think, probably, into five qualifications;—these on our side would make it quite a hollow business. Don't you think so?"

"Why, in all human probability, it would," replied his Lordship;—"at the same time, we must be cautious how we admit or mistake mere probabilities for absolute certainties; in all such cases there must ever be contingences, which it is impossible, or, at least, extremely difficult, to foresee or guard against. It is a matter of doubt with me whether Mr. Ramsay has yet been infeft in these lands of Kindyford and Caulfauld, and whether there is not a wadset on the lands of Ogilface and Haggiescape? In all likelihood our opponents are using every means to bring some such *corps de reserve* into the field. Also, I understand, there were two new claims preferred for enrolment on the lands of Stonykirk and Kilnettles at the last meeting of freeholders; and we may reasonably conclude that the roll will be still farther augmented by the adverse party—that is, if it is possible for them to do so."

While this colloquy, and much more of the same kind, was carrying on at one end of the room, the other presented Lady Betty, spread out in full dress on a sofa, with Flora by her side, and Colonel Delmour and Mr. Lyndsay at a little distance, engaged in some debate. Gertrude, on entering, almost uncon-

sciously seated herself at one of the windows, apart from everybody; but she was immediately joined by her cousins. Colonel Delmour remarked, with secret satisfaction, the agitation of her look and manner.

He imputed it entirely to the declaration he had ventured to make, which he thought had probably given rise to some discussions betwixt her mother and her, and which he had no doubt would end, as all such discussions between mother and daughter generally do, in favour of the lover.

But this was not precisely the time when he wished his pretensions to be publicly known—and he was rather desirous that Miss St. Clair's emotions should pass unobserved.

Colonel Delmour's manner, however, although guarded and respectful, nevertheless carried with it that nameless something which made even the object of his professed idolatry feel he had gained an ascendency over her, and that the worshipped was also the worshipper. While he leant on the back of her chair Mr. Lyndsay once or twice addressed some remark to her, but, absent and occupied, she scarcely seemed to hear him.

"Is it to-day that you would have me begin to sketch your portrait?" said he, with a smile.

"No—not to-day," replied she, in some confusion.

"And why not? To paint from nature, one must take nature in all her various moods and aspects."

"But I don't love stormy cloudy pictures," said Gertrude, with a sigh.

Colonel Delmour looked reproachfully at her, as he whispered, "Strange, that this day, which has been the brightest in my life, should seem cloudy to you. Ah, Gertrude! why do we not view it with the same eyes?"

Gertrude blushed deeply, but remained silent.

"What o'clock is it?" inquired Lady Betty.

"Seven minutes to six," said Miss Pratt, as she entered, and tripping past Lady Betty, joined the group in the window. "Anything new going on here?—It's changed days with you, Colonel, to be in the drawing-room before dinner; we seldom used to see you till the first course was going away." Surveying Gertrude from head to foot, "What's come over you to-day, my dear? You're not looking like yourself. I think you've got too many of these passion-flowers in your head. Mr. Edward, you must not take your cousin's picture to-day, or else she must part with some of these passion-flowers; I really don't think they're becoming; just let me take out that one——" and she was preparing to lay her hands upon it, when hers were seized by Colonel Delmour.

"Bless me, Colonel, don't be so violent; I'm sure I wasn't going to take off Miss St. Clair's head;—they may well be called passion-flowers, for they really seem to have put you in a fine passion; and you've crumpled all my ruff, and squeezed one of my fingers to the bone."

Colonel Delmour, colouring a little at the transport of indignation he had given way to, affected to laugh

it off, and, releasing Miss Pratt's hands from his grasp, said in a low whisper—

"I beg pardon if, in the ardour of my passion, I did press your hands too—too tenderly—impute the blame——"

"I don't know what you mean, Colonel Delmour," cried Miss Pratt aloud, as she stroked down her ruff and caressed her injured finger, with every appearance of ill-humour; "but I know you've left your marks upon me in a pretty manner. I didn't know Miss St. Clair's head had been your property, or, I assure you, I wouldn't have offered to touch it; but I know if she's wise, she'll take care how she trusts you with her hand, after seeing how you've used mine," and she held up a red angry-looking finger, and shook her ruff—"and only look at my ruff!"

"What's the matter with your ruff?" asked Lady Betty; "it looks very neat, I think."

"Neat! it was more than neat, but Colonel Delmour has spoiled the seat of it, and I'll have to get it all goffered over again."

"By-the-bye, Miss Pratt," said Colonel Delmour, "since you denounce me as the destroyer of your ruff—it is a deed for which I merit the thanks of all pious, well-disposed persons in general, and of the kirk-session in particular. I read a history of ruffs t'other day, which harrowed up my soul, and made my young blood to freeze. I assure you, ever since I have been initiated into the shocking mysteries of ruff-making, Hamlet's horror at sight of his father's

ghost has been nothing compared to mine when I behold a stiff well-appointed ruff, so completely is it associated in my mind's eye with hoofs and horns, blackness and brimstone;"—then going to the library, he presently returned with an ancient folio in his hand, and, turning over the leaves, he read as follows, with an air of ludicrous horror and dismay: "The Anatomie of Abuses, containing a Discoverie or brief Summarie of such Notable Vices and Imperfections as now raigne in many Counteries of the World, etc. etc. etc. By Phillip Stubbes, 1583.

". . . They have greate and monsterous ruffes, made either of cambricke, lawne, or els of some other of the finest cloth that can be got for monie, whereof some be a quarter of a yarde deepe, yea, some more, very fewe lesse: So that they stande a fulle quarter of a yarde (and more) from their neckes, hanging over their shoulder pointes insteade of a vaile. But wot ye what? the deivill, as he, in the fullnesse of his malice, first invented these greate ruffes, so hath he now found out also two greate pillars to beare up and maintaine this his kingdome of pride withal. The one arche or pillar, wherebye his kingdom of greate ruffes is under propped, is a certain kinde of liquide matter which they call starch, wherein the deivill hath willed them to washe and to drie their ruffes well, which being drie, will then stand stiffe and inflexible aboute their neckes. The other pillar is a certaine device made of wiers crested for the purpose, whipped either over with golde thred, silver, or silke,

and this he calleth a underpropper. Beyond all this, theye have a farther fetche, nothynge inferior to the reste, as namely, three or four decrees of minar ruffes placed in *gradatim*, one beneathe another, and all under the Mayster Deivill Ruffe, sometimes they are——"

"Such nonsense!" exclaimed Miss Pratt. "I really never heard the like of it. I wonder how you have patience to listen to it, Lady Betty. I really think Miss St. Clair might show more sense than to laugh at such ridiculous stuff. There's the gong, that's better worth attending to;" and away walked Miss Pratt and her ruff.

The politicians were also roused at the sound; and as they broke up, Mrs. St. Clair said to Lord Rossville—

"Rest assured, my Lord, nothing shall be wanting on my part to gain the suffrages of my family; and I have little doubt of accomplishing it, since your Lordship has thus kindly and considerately give me a *carte blanche*, as it were, for my actions upon the occasion. I feel most deeply the value of the confidence you have thus reposed in me."

Lord Rossville had done no such thing as give or dream of giving Mrs. St. Clair a *carte blanche* for her actions;—but he loved to hear himself commended, whether for what he had done, or for what he had not done; and he therefore allowed it to pass, in the belief that he was indeed all that was kind, wise, and considerate. Gertrude, as a matter of course, was

again placed between Lord Rossville and Mr. Delmour, and condemned, during a tedious dinner, to hear the same political jargon carried on. Mr. Delmour now and then changed the conversation, indeed, out of compliment to her, and talked of the views, the weather, the races, and such subjects as he seemed to think suited to a female capacity; but it was evidently an effort to descend to such things, and Gertrude felt only provoked that he should even attempt to be agreeable.

When they rose from table her mother made a sign for her to follow her to her own room.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Never in my breast
Did ignorance so struggle with desire
Of knowledge, . . .
As in that moment; nor—dar'd I
To question, nor myself could aught discern."
CARY'S *Dante.*

"YOU are a poor dissembler, Gertrude," said Mrs. St. Clair, after having shut the door of her chamber, and carefully examined each lurking recess; "your looks have already betrayed to the family that something is wrong; even stupid Lady Betty asked me at dinner whether you were well enough. It is therefore obvious you are suffering either from mental disquiet or bodily indisposition, and it must be your part to play the invalid this evening." Then seeing her daughter about to express her dislike of the deception, "It is easily done—you have only to remain here, and leave it to me to account for your absence in the drawing-room;"—then, with a profound sigh, "the headache and the heartache are both mine, God knows! but if you will only affect to bear the one for me you will assuredly alleviate the other."

Gertrude felt that she was become a mere tool in her mother's hands, and that it was in vain to contend.

She therefore yielded a passive assent to remaining a prisoner for the rest of the evening.

Various were the conjectures, and numberless the remedies, called forth by Mrs. St. Clair's communication of her daughter's indisposition. The heat of the day—the drive—the roads—the dust—the dinner—Uncle Adam and his airless room,—all these, and many more, were each assigned as a sufficient cause for headache, and eau-de-Cologne, aromatic vinegar, and all the thousand perfumed specifics, down to Lady Betty's home-made double-distilled lavender water, were recommended and accepted. As for Lord Rossville, he made it quite a matter of life and death—"A fever commonly began with a headache. Was there any disposition to shivering on the part of the patient?—any thirst—any fever—any bile? How were the eyes? how was the tongue? how was the pulse? A little blood taken in time was perhaps the most effectual antidote. He possessed some knowledge of medicine himself; and, in short, Mrs. St. Clair only prevented him from going to prescribe for his niece in person, by assuring him that she felt a great disposition to sleep, and had requested that she might not be disturbed. It was therefore finally settled that if Miss St. Clair was no better by to-morrow morning she was then to be given up to his Lordship's direction.

Colonel Delmour suspected there was some deception in the case, and was at no loss, as he thought, to fathom the mystery. He believed their mutual

attachment had been discovered by Mrs. St. Clair, and that Gertrude was suffering persecution on his account; but he felt little apprehension as to the result; he knew enough of human nature to be aware that, to a romantic ardent nature such as hers, a little opposition would have rather a good effect, and that there is sometimes no surer way of creating an interest in one party than by exciting a prejudice in another.

Meanwhile, the object of all this solicitude sat at her window, "watching the coming on of grateful evening mild." It was at that lovely season when day and night are so imperceptibly blended into each other, that night seems only a softer, sweeter day. There were none of those magnificent masses of clouds which in this climate generally form the pomp and circumstance of a fine sunset. The sky was cloudless and serene, and a soft, silvery moon shone in one quarter of the heavens, while the mellow golden lustre of the sun gradually melted away in the other.

"When the last sunshine, with expiring ray,
In Summer twilight weeps the close of day,
Who hath not felt the softness of that hour
Steal o'er his heart like dew-drops on the flower?"

Then came the deeper blue of the silent night, with her "solemn bird and glittering stars."

But Gertrude was withdrawn from the contemplation of these consecrated things by the entrance of her mother. She threw herself on a chair and sighed heavily; then starting up—

"Prepare yourself, Gertrude; in a few minutes we must set forth;—fetch your green travelling cloak, it will completely cover your dress, and conceal your figure, should we unfortunately meet any one, which Heaven forbid!"

Gertrude brought her cloak, and did as she was directed, while her mother wrapped herself in a similar disguise, and both awaited in trembling expectation the signal for sallying forth. At length the gong sounded—voices were heard as the family passed through the hall to the supper-room—the doors were shut, and all was silent.

"Now is the time," said Mrs. St. Clair in a voice almost inarticulate from agitation. "Yet stay—should it by any unforeseen mischance ever reach Lord Rossville's ears that we were seen leaving the house together at such an hour—no, that will never do—Gertrude, you must go first, and I will follow."

"Oh no, no!" cried her daughter, turning pale with terror; "why should that be?—surely that can make no difference."

"No difference in reality, but much in appearance," said Mrs. St. Clair impatiently. "Your stealing out to take a ramble by moonlight, however silly, would not sound very improbable, and my following you would be perfectly natural; but both going out together is quite unaccountable, and must not be. Go! make haste!"

"Oh, mamma! do not, I beseech you—do not ask me to go alone. I cannot—indeed, I cannot;" and she sank upon a chair.

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed her mother in a tone of suppressed anger; "of what are you afraid?"

"I know not. I cannot tell. I am going I know not where—to meet—I know not whom—and at midnight. No, I cannot—I *will* not go;" and she threw back her cloak, and shook off her hat, with gestures of impatience and indignation.

"Obstinate—unfeeling—ungrateful wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, giving way to her passion; "is it for you that I suffer—that I—— Why do I not give you up to your fate at once?—why?—but I *will* be obeyed. I command you on your peril to obey me."

Gertrude threw herself on the floor at her mother's feet. "Kill me—trample on me," cried she in an accent of despair; "but my soul revolts from these mysteries. Oh! my mother!" continued she in broken accents, "is it you who commands me thus to steal from my uncle's house at midnight —disguised and alone—to meet a low-born, needy, desperate man?"

Mrs. St. Clair remained silent for a few moments, as if struggling with her feelings; she then spoke in a voice of unnatural calmness—

"Be it so. My entreaties—my prayers—my commands are in vain; the die is cast by your hand, and my doom is fixed. I told you that my life depended upon your unreserved obedience—and—— The forfeit shall be paid."

Gertrude looked on her mother's face—every

feature was convulsed with powerful and fearful emotion; then every idea vanished but that of her mother dying—dead—and she the cause. All personal fear—all lofty feeling fled: the right chord was touched, and her whole frame vibrated with emotion. She clung to her mother's knees; she sued for pardon; she vowed the most implicit obedience, the most devoted submission to her will; she called Heaven to witness that henceforth she would do all that was required of her; she prayed that she might be tried once, only once more. She spoke with all the ardour and sincerity of powerful emotion, but it is not with a throbbing heart and a burning brow that the mastery is obtained; if vows made in pain are void, those formed under the influence of excited feeling are no less vain and fleeting. Mrs. St. Clair's features gradually relaxed, and, in a more natural voice, she said—

"I forgive you, Gertrude—I forgive your doubts, your fears, however injurious to me. Go, then; but ere you go, reflect on what you have undertaken—remember you have vowed *unqualified* obedience—there is now no middle course; you are either my preserver or my destroyer." She poured out a glass of water, and held it to her daughter's trembling lips. "Now listen to my instructions:—Glide quickly and softly along till you reach the south turret stair; be cautious in descending it, and making your way along the old passage to the west door, which is seldom locked; when there, you have only to cross the lawn

—keep by the river side, and wait me at the ivy bridge; fear nothing—I will follow you immediately."

Gertrude again muffled herself in her cloak, and, with a beating heart, went on her way as fast as terror and agitation would permit. She groped her way down the little turnpike stair, and along a dark passage, in an old part of the house, to a door which opened upon the lawn. But there all things stood disclosed in the light of a full moon, and calm, cloudless sky, and her heart almost failed her as she marked her own dark shapeless shadow stealing along on the silvery path. She soon gained the bank of the river, and there, in the deep shade of the rocks and trees, she felt secure, at least from discovery, if not from danger. A few steps more and she reached the bridge, where she was to await her mother.

At another time she would have been charmed with the romantic loveliness and grandeur of the scene. Rocks, trees, and waterfall, all gleamed in the pale pellucid light—not a leaf was stirring, and the solemn stillness was only broken by the rushing of the river, and the whooping of the owls. But to enjoy the tranquillity of nature requires that there should be some sympathy between the mind and the scene; and Gertrude's feelings were but little in unison with the calm, the holy majesty of moonlight. Scarcely daring to breathe, every instant seemed an age, till she beheld her mother advance with a quick but agitated step.

"We are late," said she in a low tone; "let us

make haste;" and taking her daughter's arm, they proceeded together in silence for a considerable distance till they came within sight of a temple situated on the summit of the bank.

"It was there I appointed to meet him," said Mrs. St. Clair; and as she spoke the figure of a man was seen approaching towards them. "Wait here, Gertrude," cried she, waving her daughter back, as she would have clung to her. "I shall be within sight and call of you. Do not stir from hence, and remember your promise."

And disengaging herself from her she hastily advanced to meet the stranger. It was not in human nature not to have felt the most intense curiosity at this moment; and Gertrude certainly experienced it in no common degree, when she beheld her mother's meeting with this mysterious man. Although beyond the reach of hearing what passed, their gestures told a tale of no common import. After remaining a few minutes in deep and earnest conversation, she saw Mrs. St. Clair offer him a packet, which she guessed was the one containing the money and jewels. She then saw the person reject it, as if with scorn, and even turn away from it, as Mrs. St. Clair seemed to press it upon him. This dumb show lasted some minutes, till at length he snatched it from the hand she held out to him, and threw it upon the ground, and made some steps towards the place where Gertrude stood. Mrs. St. Clair caught him by the arm; she seemed to be arguing, imploring, supplicating.

Now she clasped her hands, as if in an agony; then she raised them, as if in solemn appeal to Heaven, and Gertrude caught the sound of her voice, in tones of the deepest anguish. At length she seemed to prevail. Having herself lifted up the packet he had so contemptuously cast away, she again offered it to him, and it was accepted. They now advanced together till within a few paces of Gertrude, when Mrs. St. Clair quitted her companion and approached her daughter. The shade of the trees covered her face, but her voice was expressive of the utmost agitation.

"Gertrude, my love," said she in a low tone, "Lewiston wishes to see you, to talk with you, as the husband of your nurse, and a sort of confidential person in the family; he thinks he has a right to address you in his own way. I dare not refuse Gertrude—he *will* converse with you alone."

Mrs. St. Clair placed her hand on her daughter's lips, as she saw an indignant refusal ready to burst forth—

"Oh, Gertrude! dearest Gertrude! as you value my life, as you value your own happiness, do not refuse—do not provoke him. I am in his power—one hasty word, one contemptuous look, may undo me. Oh, Gertrude! for the love you bear to me, for the love you bore your nurse, for the love of Heaven—be calm and patient. Speak—tell me I may trust you!"

And she led her a few steps towards the stranger. Gertrude started with terror, as the moonbeams now fell on her mother's face, and showed it wild, and even ghastly, from excessive emotion.

"Compose yourself, mamma," said she; "I will do —I will be all your desire."

There was no time for more, for the stranger, as if impatient of delay, had now joined them; he held out his hand to Gertrude with an air of familiarity, which at once roused her indignation, and had almost thrown her off her guard, when a look from her mother subdued her. With a blush of wounded pride she suffered him to take it, and Mrs. St. Clair walked apart. He surveyed her for some minutes without speaking, while her cheek burned, and her heart swelled at the indignity to which she was thus subjected. At length he said abruptly—

"Do you remember your nurse?"

"Perfectly."

"How old were you when she died?"

"I was nine years old."

"You were very fond of her, were you not?"

"I loved her as my mother," answered Gertrude in a voice of deep emotion.

"That was well—you are aware that I was her husband, consequently, have some claim to a share of your affection. Do you think you will be able to bestow any of it upon me?"

Gertrude's spirit was ready to burst forth at the insolent freedom of this address, but she repressed it, and answered coldly—

"As the husband of my nurse I am willing to assist you as far as I am able, but I have little in my power at present."

"True, but the time will come when you will have much."

"When I have," answered Gertrude, wishing to end the conference, "the claims of my nurse's husband shall not be forgotten;" and she was moving away.

"Stop," cried he, "not so fast—the claims of your nurse's husband are not so easily settled as you seem to suppose. I wish to put a few more questions to you, young lady, before we part. How am I to be assured that you will ever have it in your power to assist me in the world?"

"I can give you no assurance," said Gertrude; "all that I can say is—if ever it is in my power to befriend you, for the sake of your wife, I shall be ready to do it."

"Only for the sake of my wife!" repeated he with a smile. "We shall see how that is when the time comes, whether I shall not have something to say with you for my own sake."

In silent displeasure Gertrude turned proudly away, when he caught her cloak to detain her.

"Well, we shall settle that afterwards; but if you play your cards well, you will one day have something in your power, or the deuce is in it. The worst of it is, that day may be a while of coming, and your friends may starve in the meantime; but your uncle is a pretty old boy, and you are sure of succeeding."

Gertrude was choking with indignation, but she remembered her promise, and remained silent.

"What are your plans for the future?" demanded he abruptly.

"I am not in the habit of communicating my plans to strangers," answered she haughtily.

"But I have a *right* to know your plans," said he fiercely; "I insist upon an answer to my question. What are your plans for the future?"

Gertrude was terrified. "I am ignorant of your meaning," said she faintly.

"I mean, in the event of your uncle's death, what would you do? Would you marry or remain single? and has your mother attempted to influence you in favour of anybody? Answer me that; does she wish you to marry or not?—say——"

"It is impossible for me to answer—I do not know—I cannot tell," answered Gertrude, almost overcome with the contending emotions of terror and indignation.

"Are you sure of that? Is there no Colonel Delmour in the case, ready to swindle the heiress out of her estates? But that won't do; you must beware how you entangle yourself there; you must beware how you commit yourself—or, by Jupiter!—— Come, I must know how the land lies; I must know how you stand affected to those fortune-hunters who are looking after you;" and he would have taken her hand with an air of familiarity, which now completely threw her off her guard. Uttering a piercing cry, which echoed through the woods, she flew wildly past him, and cast herself into her mother's arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Since in the toils of fate
Thou art enclos'd, submit, if thou canst brook
Submission."

ÆSCHYLUS.

WHEN Gertrude awoke the following morning from a feverish and disturbed sleep, her mind, like the broken fragments of a mirror, presented only disjointed and distorted images, which she vainly endeavoured to arrange and combine into one connected whole. Hideous dreams were mingled with no less hideous realities, and confusion only became worse confounded in the attempt to separate them. At length she opened her eyes, and beheld her mother sitting by her.

"Oh! mamma," cried she, "speak to me—tell me what has happened—last night. Was it—oh! was it all a dream?"

"Compose yourself, Gertrude," answered Mrs. St. Clair; "whatever it was it is now past—think of it no more."

"Impossible—I can think of nothing else! I must know—I implore you to tell me at least this much—

last night—Mr. Lyndsay—oh! tell me, did he not rescue me from the grasp——"

"Gertrude," interrupted her mother in great agitation, "of what use is it to talk or think of what is past? It is distressing to yourself—to me."

"It was then even so! I now remember it all—their high words—their threatening language—and that man——"

"Hush, Gertrude, hush!" again interposed her mother; "you know not what you say."

"Yes—I know it all—he dared to assert that he had a right over me—*he*, the husband of my nurse, to dare to claim a right over me!" and her voice was almost choked, at the thoughts of having been subjected to such an indignity.

"But, mamma, surely this was—this must have been a dream; I know it was," and she gasped as she spoke. "When he appealed to you—you—oh! —you said it was so; I know I must have dreamt *that*," and she looked wildly and eagerly in her mother's face; but Mrs. St. Clair remained silent.

"Oh! you did not—you could not speak of engagements—of entanglements—of—I know not what—yet strange and dreadful words of that import still ring in my ears. Tell me—only tell me it is all a dream."

"Gertrude, this is agonising to yourself—to me. Repress—in mercy repress those feelings."

"I will—I will," cried her daughter, in increasing agitation; "only say you did not so traduce me as to sanction the horrible belief that I could be so base—

so vile—oh! how it degrades me even to utter it—as to have plighted myself to a menial."

"Compose yourself, Gertrude; I cannot talk to you while you are in this state."

"Well, I will—I am composed," making a violent effort to appear calm, while her frame trembled with the violence of her emotion. "Now only say that you, my mother, did not so calumniate me—but no, you cannot," cried she, again giving way to the impetuosity of her feelings. "It is no dream—I heard it all. I heard you—you, my mother, assert that man had a claim to me, and—I believe I was mad at that moment—did I not throw myself at my cousin's feet and implore him to save me—did I not cling to him in agony, while that man would have torn me from him?"

"Gertrude, I would have spared you the repetition of your folly—your madness—I would have spared you the painful recollection of your broken promise, your injurious distrust of me; I warned you of the consequences of disregarding my injunctions—my entreaties—my commands—but all *were* disregarded. What right have you, then, to upbraid me for having told you the truth?"

"No, you did not tell me the truth; you did not tell me you were leading me to insult—to degradation."

"Say not that I led you; but for your own pride and folly all would have been well; had you remembered my warning, and not provoked the person it was your interest as well as mine to have conciliated,

nothing of all this would have happened; but your absurd outcry reached Mr. Lyndsay, who, unfortunately, had been enticed by the beauty of the night to take a moonlight ramble, and who hastened to the spot unhappily at the same moment when the other advanced; but the worst is over. Mr. Lyndsay is a nobled-minded, honourable man, and we have nothing to fear from him; he has promised to be for ever silent on the subject."

"But what—oh! what must he think of me!" exclaimed Gertrude, in an accent of the deepest dejection.

"Be assured he thinks nothing injurious of you."

"Yet that man dared to assert that my father had given him a right to me—*he*, the husband of my nurse! No, I will not—I cannot for an instant live under such a sense of degradation; I must seek Mr. Lyndsay; I must tell him it is false!" And she attempted to rise, but sank back on her pillow overwhelmed with the force of her emotions.

"For Heaven's sake, Gertrude, do not give way to these transports!" cried her mother. "Everything is now settled; the object of your alarm is already many miles distant—never more, I trust, to return; why then dwell upon what is past when it can be productive of no good? Come, my love, for my sake try to forget it all."

"Forget it!" repeated Gertrude; "forget that I have been exposed to insult—to degradation, and by my mother!—that I never can forget."

"No, do not forget it," cried Mrs. St. Clair, burst-

ing into tears; "treasure it in your heart's core; let all my love, and care, and tenderness be forgotten; let your duty, your obedience, your promises be forgotten; but do not forget this one unfortunate action; record it, proclaim it, and then let me end a miserable existence. Shall I summon Lord Rossville and the family," said she, with affected calmness, putting her hand to the bell, "to hear you denounce your mother?"

Time had been when this appeal would have produced its intended effect upon Gertrude; but her feelings had been already excited to their utmost, and she felt too wretched herself to have much sympathy to bestow on the author of her wretchedness; she therefore remained silent. Mrs. St. Clair repeated the question.

"I have not deserved this," replied Gertrude coldly; "but I am still willing to obey you. What would you have me do?"

Mrs. St. Clair embraced her, and would have coaxed and soothed her, but she shrank from these demonstrations of affection, and again coldly asked what remained for her to do.

"I would have you appear, if possible, at breakfast, my love; if you do not, Lord Rossville will insist upon sending for medical advice, and will make a talk and a bustle about you, which may excite speculation and surmise, and anything of that sort had better be avoided at present; you will therefore oblige me, my dearest, if you will endeavour to look and be as much yourself as possible; and now, I shall leave

you to make your toilet, while I change my dress, for I have not been in bed all night. I have watched by you, Gertrude, and that not for the first time."

Gertrude was touched by this proof of her mother's solicitude, and all the recollected proofs of her maternal anxieties for her in her childish days rushed to her heart, and with the returning tide brought back something of tenderer, kindlier feelings. Yielding, as she always did, to the impulse of the moment, she received her mother's embrace, and the scene ended in a reconciliation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"There is no resource where there is no understanding."
St. Therese.

Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter descended together to the breakfast-room, but at the thoughts of meeting her cousin after what had so recently occurred, Gertrude's agitation almost overcame her, and she seated herself at the table without daring to lift her eyes. Many were the inquiries with which she was of course assailed, but Miss Pratt's observations, as usual, predominated.

"I'm afraid, my dear, there's more than a common headache the matter with you; you put me very much in mind of Anthony Whyte when he was taking the influenza; he had just a little pink spot on the top of one cheek, and all the rest of his face as white as the tablecloth; and your eyes, too, seem very heavy, just like his—he never looked up for two days." The little pink spot had gradually increased with Miss Pratt's remarks; but making an effort to look up, Miss St. Clair raised her eyes, and encountered not Mr. Lyndsay's dreaded gaze, but that of Colonel Delmour, fixed upon her with anxious scrutiny. Lyndsay

was not present, nor was there even a place reserved for him. Miss Pratt seemed to read what was passing in her thoughts.

"So you've lost one of your beaux, you see? Mr. Edward went off this morning, it seems; it must have been a sudden thought, for he said nothing of it yesterday; and, by-the-bye, what became of him at supper last night? I wonder if he had a headache too?—they say there's a sympathy in bodies as well as in minds sometimes; Colonel Delmour, do you believe that?"

"I have heard there is in souls a sympathy with sounds," replied Colonel Delmour, with an ironical, contemptuous air; "but my soul is, I grieve to say, so lost to all that is edifying and delightful, it can rarely boast any sympathy with the sound of Miss Pratt's voice, by which means, unhappily, one half of her dulcet notes fall powerless on my dull spirit. May I beg to know what I am called upon to believe?"

"There's an old saying, Colonel, that there's none so deaf as them who won't hear; and I suspect that's your case sometimes," retorted Miss Pratt, in a very *toothy* manner, though affecting to turn the laugh against her opponent. The entrance of the post-bag here attracted Miss Pratt's attention. It was Lord Rossville's enviable prerogative to open it himself, and to *dole* out the letters in the most cautious and deliberate manner to their respective destinations—a measure which very ill accorded with the mercu-

rial powers of Miss Pratt, who, in spite of his Lordship's precautions in holding the mouth of the bag as close as he possibly could, always contrived to dart her eyes down to the very bottom of it, and to anticipate its contents long ere the moment of delivery arrived. Like all weak important people, Lord Rossville loved power in any form or substance in which it presented itself, even in that of a leather bag, which he grasped with the air of a Jupiter holding his thunderbolt, and lingered over it as though it had been another Pandora's box. Although his Lordship, for upwards of forty years, had been in the daily, nay hourly, practice of declaring that he would not be hurried—that he would take his own time, etc. etc., nevertheless, in the very teeth of this assurance, Miss Pratt did still persist in her attempts to accelerate the Earl's movements, which, of course, had invariably the effect of protracting them. On the present occasion it seemed doubtful whether the letters were ever to see the light, as, upon Miss Pratt remarking that it would be much better if there was no bag at all, for then people would get their letters at once, without being kept on the tenter-hooks this way, his Lordship closed its mouth, and, opening his own, commenced a very elaborate harangue on the impropriety, irregularity, and inconvenience of such a mode of proceeding. Meanwhile, Gertrude gradually regained her composure, and was even able to receive Colonel Delmour's assiduities with something like pleasure. At length, Miss Pratt having knocked

under, for, as she observed in an underhand way, there was no disputing with a man who held the key of the post-bag, the contents were duly distributed, and she received her portion, which kept her silent for a few minutes.

Gertrude trembled as a letter was handed to her; but her alarm subsided when she saw it was directed in a feeble, affected-looking female hand, and sealed with a fat bouncing heart, skewered with an arrow, motto, "*La peine est douce.*" The contents corresponded with these exterior symbols, and were as follows:—

"*Bellevue, July* ——

"MA CHERE COUSINE—From what passed in your presence, you will, I suspect, not be *very much* surprised to hear that a *certain person*, who shall be nameless, has carried his point, and that I have at length been prevailed upon to name *Thursday next* as the day when I am to enter upon a new state of existence! *Eh bien!* my dear coz—I hope your time is coming, and when it does, most fervently do I pray that you may prove as fortunate in *your choice* as I have done in *mine.* The Major is indeed all that I could wish—far, very far beyond my poor deserts; and I should consider myself as the *most ungrateful of women* if I did not look upon myself as the *most fortunate of my sex!* That being the case, I certainly feel less than I should otherwise do at taking this most important and solemn step; but the *certainty* that I am bestowing myself upon one who is in *every*

respect worthy of my warmest admiration, esteem, and affection, supports me; and be assured, my dear cousin, it is the *only* thing that can support the spirits at such a time. How much, alas! are they to be pitied who do not possess that *certainty*, without which, believe me, all the advantages of *birth* and *fortune* are *nothing* —for without that, I assure you, the Major's rank, fortune, connections, manners, etc. etc. etc., *never* would have influenced me. Such being the *state of affairs* here at present, I am very desirous that you, *ma chere cousine*, should participate in my feelings, and also take a lesson for what, rest assured, will *one day be your own fate*. I therefore request, as a *particular favour*, that you will give us the pleasure of your company to pass the intervening days with me, and to officiate as bridesmaid upon *a certain occasion*. The Major unites with me in this request, so it will be a *double* disappointment if anything should prevent you. Papa and mamma also join in the wish that my nuptials should be *graced* with your presence. The Major offered to drive down for you any day in the gig—(*àpropos*, I must tell you he admires you very much—but I am *not jealous*);—but I own at present, I think that would be making the thing *rather* public, and besides—shall I confess my *weakness*?—I feel particularly timid at the thoughts of the Major risking himself in a gig at present—only conceive my situation, if anything should happen to him!!! I trust you will be at no loss for an opportunity, and that I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you here, and

of making you better acquainted with my *lord* and *master* to be. Adio mia cara, ISABELLA.

"Pray, have you heard any more of your *beau?* The Major thinks he must be a *spy*. I. C. B.

"Excuse haste, but the Major is sitting by me, and says he is ready to *quarrel with you*, for engrossing so much of my time. I. C. B."

In great disgust at the vulgar, affected familiarity of this performance, Gertrude handed it to her mother in silence, resolved in her own mind to return a brief denial to Miss Bell's invitation. Not so Mrs. St. Clair, who thought nothing could be more *àpropos* than this proposal. She was desirous of removing her daughter from the observation of the family until her mind should have regained its usual tone, and she knew nothing would be so likely to effect that as change of scene and necessity of exertion. It would require a little management, perhaps, to obtain Lord Rossville's consent; but in the present state of affairs that would be easily obtained; and having settled all this, she put the letter in her reticule, with an air that said, This requires consideration.

Miss Pratt now made known the contents of her despatch, which was a pressing invitation to spend a few days at old Lady M'Caw's, to meet Mrs. Chatwell and the Miss Knowalls—just a nice little female party. It was a pleasant thing for old friends to meet, and talk over old stories now and then, etc. etc. etc.

"So, Miss Pratt, we are going to lose you then, it

seems?" said the Earl, in an accent of agreeable surprise, and a visage beaming with delight.

"Indeed, it's not very well bred, my Lord, to run away in this manner," replied Miss Pratt; "but it's an old promise of mine to Lady M'Caw, honest woman, and I would not like to disappoint her, especially as she is so good as say she'll send the carriage for me to-morrow morning. However, I shall make out my visit to you yet; and if I can get hold of Anthony Whyte, will bring him with me."

Lord Rossville's countenance fell at this assurance. He had been anxiously waiting the termination of Miss Pratt's visit, that he might give a dinner to some of the stateliest of the neighbouring grandees; a thing which could not be got up with good effect while that lady was his guest. Her light frothy babbles disconcerted his heavy sonorous speeches; her brisk familiarity detracted from the dignity of his manner;—it was as impossible for him to be the dignified nobleman with Miss Pratt at his elbow, as it would have been with an ape on his shoulder. However, it was a great point gained to have got her fairly off the field, and he flattered himself, with a little management, he might contrive to exclude her till it suited his time to receive her again. Contrary to his usual practice, but in conformity with the vulgar proverb, he therefore resolved to make hay while the sun shone, and straightway set about issuing his cards immediately. In this complacent mood, Mrs. St. Clair found little difficulty in obtaining his consent to Gertrude's visit

to Bellevue, which she took care to insinuate would prove highly advantageous in a political point of view—a bait which the Earl instantly caught at. He even declared his intention, and that of Mr. Delmour, to pay their respects to the worthy family, at Bellevue the following day; and finally it was settled that they should accompany Mrs. and Miss St. Clair there, leaving the latter to officiate at her cousin's nuptials—an office which, in the present state of the political contest, was not deemed derogatory even for the heiress presumptive of Rossville.

Colonel Delmour seemed somewhat chagrined at first hearing of this arrangement; but upon reflection he began to discover that it might rather advance his purpose to have the object of his pursuit withdrawn for a while from the watchful eyes of her guardians; and he secretly resolved to be a daily visitor at Bellevue while she remained. As for Gertrude, whatever repugnance she felt at first to the proposal, she soon yielded to her mother's solicitations, for she was a stranger to that selfishness which is obstinate in trifles.

Miss Pratt's departure was hailed as a joyful release by the whole party, with the exception, indeed, of Lady Betty and Mr. Delmour. The one was too stupid, and the other too much engrossed, to have any discrimination in their choice of company; with the one words were words, and Miss Pratt's words were as good, if not better, than other people's words; with the other, Miss Pratt was Miss Pratt, and one Miss was very much like another during a contested election.

CHAPTER XXV.

"They who love you for political service, love you less than their dinner; and they who hate you, hate you worse than the devil."—WESLEY.

THE whole Black family were evidently prepared for the reception of their visitors; and as they were all good-looking, and well-dressed, the *tout ensemble* was highly prepossessing. Indeed, had it been otherwise, they would still have found favour in the eyes of Lord Rossville and his nephew, who, in each and all of the human beings now assembled, even to the baby, beheld simply a vote or the article or particle of a vote. The Earl therefore parsed and prosed away to good Mrs. Black, who sat listening to him with the most perfect reverence and admiration. Had the speaker been their neighbour, old Mr. Longlungs, she might perhaps have thought him rather long-winded; but it was still the golden age of innocence with Mrs. Black, for it never once occurred to her that it was possible for an Earl to be as tiresome as a commoner. She therefore hung enamoured on his Lordship's accents; but when he condescended so far as to take one of the children on his knee, and to drink the healths of the whole family in what he declared to be the very best Malm-

sey Madeira he had ever tasted, the conquest of Mrs. Black was completed; and she secretly vowed in her heart that she would never rest night or day, till, by hook or by crook, she had secured Mr. Black's vote for him. And then, as he seemed so taken with them all, there was no saying but he might get a company for Bob, and give his business to Davy. And with these splendid visions, Mrs. Black's comely good-humoured face beamed upon the Earl with an expression he was little accustomed to on the countenances of his auditors.

Mr. Delmour, on his part, was not idle, having talked very sensibly with Mr. Black on

> "Russet lawns and fallows gray,
> Where the nibbling flocks do stray;"

that is, in plain prose, on the rearing and feeding of cattle, succession of crops, etc. etc. He next addressed himself to a very pretty particle of a vote in the person of Miss Lilly Black, who had made some faint and inefficient attempts to discover whether he wrote poetry, till, growing bolder as she advanced, she at length popped the question whether he would not write something in her album. Mr. Delmour protested, with the most perfect truth, that he never had written a verse in his life; but to soften the disappointment added, with a bow and most expressive look, that if ever he was to be so inspired, it must be on the present occasion. Miss Lilly blushed, and had no doubt that Mr. Delmour was over head and ears in love with her already; and having read every novel

in the circulating library at Barnford, Miss Lilly was ready to be fallen in love with at a moment's warning.

Mrs. Major Waddell to be was the only one of the family then at home who did not appear. She said that, in her situation, it was extremely unpleasant to be stared at by strangers, and as Lord Rossville and Mr. Delmour must know perfectly well how she was situated, they would easily understand her reasons for declining all introductions in her present situation. Miss Bell, however, secretly flattered herself that her absence would be too striking to be passed over in silence, and that Lord Rossville would make a point of seeing her; great was her mortification, therefore, when the whole party drove off, with the exception of Gertrude, who was left behind. The bride-elect descended to the drawing-room in hopes of hearing that the Major and she had formed the principal subject of conversation; but there she found Mrs. Black trying to remember all that Lord Rossville had said about the line of the New Canal, and Mr. Black already anticipating the arrival of a couple of pure Merinos, which Mr. Delmour was to procure for him from his uncle the Duke of Burlington; Miss Lilly was expressing her wonder to Miss St. Clair whether it was really true that Mr. Delmour did not write poetry, and the children were squabbling over the remains of the cake.

"I hope there was no particular allusion to the Major and me," said Miss Bell, seeing it in vain to

wait for any voluntary communication; in my situation such things are not very pleasant."

"There was no mention made of you whatever, Bell," was the reply.

"I assure you I'm very happy to hear it," said Miss Bell, in evident displeasure, to which she could only give vent by turning the children out of the room for making a noise, which they, of course, redoubled outside the door, till dragged shrieking away by their maid.

Miss St. Clair already felt the discomforts of her situation—seated in a dressed drawing-room for the day, with Mrs. Black and her daughters, who seemed to have renounced all occupation for that of being company to their guest; and "labour dire it is and weary woe," in such cases, whether to the entertainer or the entertained.

Gertrude felt too strange, too much out of her own element, to give free scope to her mind; she felt she was amongst those who did not understand her, nor she them; the tone of their minds was pitched in a totally different key, and their ideas, tastes, and habits, she was convinced, never could assimilate with hers. At length Miss Lilly produced her album for the amusement or admiration of her cousin, and turned over page after page, emblazoned with miserable drawings of dropsical Cupids with blue aprons, doves that might have passed for termagants, stout calico roses, heart's-ease that was eye-sore, and forget-me-nots that ought to have been washed in the waters

of Lethe. All these had, of course, appropriate lines, or lines that were intended as such. Beneath a rose, which bore evident traces of having been washed with a sponge, was written in a small dieaway hand, scarcely visible to the naked eye, Cowper's pretty verses,

"A rose had been washed, just washed in a shower," etc.

A bunch of heart's-ease, which might have served for a sign-post, was emblematic of a sonnet to a violet, beginning,

"Sweet modest flower that lurk'st unseen," etc.

But the forget-me-nots had called forth an original effusion addressed to Miss Lilly B., as follows :—

"Forget thee, sweet maid ?—ah, how vain the request!
Thy image fond memory has stamped on my heart;
And while life's warm pulses beat high in my breast,
Thy image shall ne'er from that bosom depart!

"The moon she is up, and the sun he is down;
The wind too is hush'd, and silent's the rill;
The birds to their little nests long since have flown;
But when will forget my sad bosom to thrill!

"Forget thee !—ah ! who that has ever beheld
Thy eye of sky-blue, and thy locks of pure gold,
Thy cheek———"

"Oh! you really mustn't read that," cried Miss Lilly, putting her hand affectedly on the place; "it is only some nonsense of Lieutenant O'Brien's."

"Pray allow me to proceed," said Gertrude, a little amused at the wretchedness of the rhymes.

"Oh, indeed I can't!" said Miss Lilly, affecting to be ashamed.

"I assure you, I am in great pain for your cheek," said Gertrude; "I'm afraid it must have swelled in order to rhyme to 'beheld.'"

"Oh, no! I assure you it wasn't my cheek but his heart that swelled," said Miss Lilly, in perfect simplicity.

"The Captain has a great genius for poetry," said Mrs. Black.

"Very great," said Miss Lilly, with a gentle sigh. "I am certain that address to the moon we saw in the newspaper was his writing."

"It's very well for people to write poetry who can't afford to buy it," said Miss Bell, with a disdainful toss; "the Major has bought a most beautiful copy of Lord Byron's works, bound in red morocco —rather too fine for reading, I think; but he said he meant it to lie upon my sofa-table, so I couldn't find fault."

"To be sure, Bell, as you say, it's a better business to buy poetry than to write it," said Mrs. Black.

Gertrude had read and could appreciate Petrarch and Metastasio; it may therefore be conceived how much she admired Lieutenant O'Brien's effusions.

"There's nothing more worth reading," said Miss Lilly, as her cousin continued to turn over the leaves of the book; "that is only some dull stupid stuff Aunt Mary copied for me; I've a good mind to tear it out, it is just like a sermon;" and she was preparing to

execute her threat, when Gertrude begged leave to read the offending lines before they were committed to the flames:—

"When I look back, and in myself behold
The wandering ways that youth could not descry;
And mark the fearful course that youth did hold,
And melt in mind each step youth stray'd awry;
My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,
O Lord! forget these faults and follies all.

"For now I see how void youth is of skill,
I see also his prime time and his end;
I do confess my faults and all my ill,
And sorrow sore for that I did offend;
And with a mind repentant of all crimes
Pardon I ask for youth ten thousand times.

"Thou that by power to life did'st raise the dead;
Thou that of grace restor'st the blind to sight:
Thou that for love thy life and love outbled;
Thou that of favour mad'st the lame go right;
Thou that can'st heal and help in all essays,
Forgive the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways."

LORD VAUX

"I like the verses," said Gertrude; "and should be glad to have them; something tells me," added she, with a sigh, as she read them over again, "that they may some day be applicable to myself."

"God forbid, my dear!" said Mrs. Black, with a look of horror—"God forbid that any of us should ever be brought to such straits as that, and I see no good in putting such dismal thoughts into young folks' heads;—but if you would like to put off your bonnet before dinner, it's time you were thinking of it——"

"For there comes the Major," cried Miss Bell.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Une froideur ou une incivilité qui vient de ceux qui sont audessus de nous, nous les fait haïr, mais un salut ou un sourire nous les réconcilié."—LA BRUYERE.

THE following day brought Colonel Delmour, and Gertrude watched, with some solicitude, the effect her relations would produce upon him. But he was upon his guard, and none but a nice observer could have detected supercilious contempt in the lofty ease of his manner. But there is an ease which causes only constraint in the minds of others, and such was Colonel Delmour's. He was much too elegant and high-bred to have anything of the familiar ease, so often a concomitant of the vulgar; but he had as little of that open simplicity of manner which is the characteristic of a noble ingenuous mind. It was that sort of ease which implies conscious superiority in its possessor, and consequently produces the opposite feeling in those less gifted mortals with whom it comes in contact. Such was the sort of undefinable sensation it created in the Black family, from the eldest to the youngest.

Simple Mrs. Black's profound and earnest inquiries after Lord Rossville, her hopes that he had not been

the worse of his ride, that he had got home before the hearty shower, etc. etc. etc., were all answered in a general way, and with an air of indifference which, as Mrs. Black afterwards declared, said very little for his natural affection. Even Miss Bell had an instinctive feeling that her airs would be all thrown away upon him, and though she did drop her carbuncle brooch (a present from the Major) upon the carpet, Colonel Delmour never so much as moved his chair or assisted in looking for it; while Miss Lilly turned over her album in vain, and in answer to her usual question of whether he was fond of poetry, he returned so brief and decided a negative as put a complete stop to all proceedings on that subject. The only one who made no attempts at display was the third daughter, Anne, a sensible, mild-looking girl, who, from her quiet, unobtrusive manners, was generally overlooked, and who now pursued her work in her usual calm way, careless alike of notice or neglect.

Colonel Delmour certainly was at no pains to gain the good graces of the family. He saw at once they were not the sort of people likely to acquire any influence over Miss St. Clair, consequently he had no motive to make him wish to ingratiate himself with them. And to have been at the trouble of making the agreeable to such a set of plebeians, would have required some very strong stimulus to one whose ruling principle was selfishness, and who never cared to please unless to serve his own purpose. He stayed long, in hopes Mrs. Black and her daughters would

have had the tact to discover that they were great bores in their own house; but no such discovery was made; on the contrary, Mrs. Black redoubled her efforts to entertain her visitor; she made many apologies for Mr. Black being from home, and asked Bell what had come over the Major—just as the Major entered. The case was now desperate; scarcely able to conceal his ill-humour, he merely noticed the introduction of Major Waddell by a slight and somewhat haughty bow, and took his leave.

"Well, cousin," cried Miss Bell, as he drove off, "I really cannot say a great deal for your Colonel; I think I never saw so ill-bred a man."

"I can't just say that, Bell," said her mother. "I'm sure he was nowise indiscreet, and we must make allowance for him, for you know we were all strangers to him, and I daresay he was just a little shy and strange at first; but that'll wear off."

"It's the oddest thing that he should not like poetry," said Miss Lilly, "for he is so handsome."

"I don't think much of his looks," said Miss Bell; "he is a great deal too tall," eyeing the Major, who was the Apollo Belvidere in her opinion, and who was at least a head shorter.

"I think our Bob must be as tall by this time," said Mrs. Black: "but I wish he may have taken the breadth with him, poor fellow."

"I don't think he has the manners of a man who has seen much of the world," resumed Miss Bell again,

looking at her lover; "no general conversation; has he ever been abroad, I wonder?"

"Come now," said the Major, turning up his bronzed visage, gilded with a strong yellow beam of delight; "are you not rather too severe? Colonel Delmour is surely a fine-looking man, and much admired, I understand, by the ladies."

"I beg you will make some exceptions, Major; but perhaps I have a very bad taste," with a conscious smile.

"I'm afraid you have, indeed," returned the Major, with a laugh of perfect ecstasy. "I'm very much afraid of it, indeed. What do you say to that, Mrs. Black? Miss St. Clair, don't you think your cousin discovers a very bad taste in her choice of some things?"

Gertrude felt too much disgusted with the vulgarity and ill-breeding of her relations to be able to reply; indeed, the only one she could with truth have made must have been a cordial assent, and she recoiled from their familiarity with a *hauteur* foreign to her nature. Mrs. Black observed her displeasure, but mistook the cause.

"You must excuse our freedom, my dear," said she; "but you see we make no stranger of you; we just look upon you as one of ourselves, and forget sometimes that your friends and relations are not ours; but there's one thing I can tell you," continued she, with a significant smile and a half whisper, "that though the Colonel's not just so taking as his brother,

we all think a great deal of *him*, and are all much pleased to think that—you know"— and Mrs. Black smiled still more significantly. "I assure you Mr. Black thinks a great deal of *him;* he says he's really a pleasant, sensible, gentlemanly, well-informed young man."

Still Gertrude's countenance did not clear up, to Mrs. Black's great surprise; for, like many other excellent wives, she thought her husband's opinion carried the greatest possible weight with it, and that Miss St. Clair must needs be much flattered to hear that her intended was so much approved of by Mr. Black. For the Earl, to advance his favourite political schemes, had dropped some ambiguous mysterious hints of the projected alliance between his nephew and niece, which Mrs. Black had easily manufactured into an approaching marriage. Rather at a loss what to make of Miss St. Clair, and the coolness with which she listened to the praises of her supposed lover, Mrs. Black now proposed that the young people should take a walk, and show their cousin something of Bellevue—there was the burn, and the Hawkhill, and the new plantation, and there was the poultry-yard—if Miss Gertrude was fond of poultry, the Bellevue poultry were reckoned the finest in the country side; and loaded with Mrs. Black's directions and suggestions, the party set forth. No party, perhaps, ever set out upon a walk without some difference of opinion as to the road to be taken; but on the present occasion the matter was soon settled by Miss Bell, who

remarked to the Major that it was so long since she had seen his sister Mrs. Fairbairn, that, if her cousin had no objections, she should like much to walk as far as the Holm.

"I have not seen your sweet little namesake, Major, since he has had the measles, and I quite long to see him, dear little fellow! and although it is an understood thing"—addressing Gertrude—"that, in my situation, I go nowhere, yet the Major's sister, you know, is an exception, and she is such a sweet domestic woman, she scarcely ever stirs from home; it is quite a treat to see Mr. and Mrs. Fairbairn in their own family—it is really a beautiful sight."

The Major was, of course, all joy and gratitude for this proposal, and highly flattered by the interest expressed for his little name-son in particular, and the eulogy bestowed on the family in general. As for Gertrude, she cared little where she went. When people are uncomfortable they flatter themselves any change must be for the better, and there is relief even in variety of wretchedness. Forward, then, they set for the Holm.

The road was not of the most picturesque description; but, indeed, it would not have been easy to have found any such in the environs of Bellevue. But, at length, after skirting many a well-dressed field, covered with flourishing crops of oats, pease, beans, potatoes, etc. etc. etc., they entered upon the sheep farm, which, although it had nothing of the romantic or beautiful to charm the eye, yet, like all

spots of unsophisticated nature, was not without attractions to those who love nature even in her simplest scenes.

The ground was hilly, covered with a carpet of close, short, sweet herbage, except here and there, where still remained patches of heath and broom, or a whin bush and a wild rose scented the breeze, their prickly stems decked with "small woolly tufts, spoils of the vagrant lamb."

The air was pure and fresh, "nimble and sweet," and Gertrude stood inhaling it with delight as she felt her spirits rise under its exhilarating influence. The Major and Miss Bell had walked on before, Miss Lilly had left the party for higher ground, which commanded a view of the county town where Lieutenant O'Brien was quartered, and Gertrude, to her great relief, was left alone with her cousin Anne.

"If there were but deer bounding instead of sheep bleating here," said she, "I could fancy myself upon the very 'Braes o' Balquither,' which you were singing about last night;" and she hummed the air— "No, I can't make it out—pray sing it to me again;" and Anne sang some verses of that sweet simple ditty—

"Will ye go, lassie, go,
To the Braes o' Balquither,
Where the blaeberries grow
'Mang the bonnie bloomin' heather.

"Where the deer and the roe,
Lightly boundin' thegither,
Sport the lang simmer day
'Mang the Braes o' Balquither.

"I will twine thee a bow'r,
By the clear silver fountain,
And I'll cover it o'er
Wi' the flowers o' the mountain.

"I will range through the wilds,
And the deep glens, sae dreary,
And return wi' their spoils
To the bower o' my deary.

"Now the summer is in prime,
Wi' the flowers richly blooming,
And the wild mountain thyme
A' the moorlands perfuming.
Will ye go," etc. etc.

"Who would not be a hunter's love," said Gertrude, "to realise so sweet a picture!"

"Ah!" said her companion in a mournful tone, "if poverty were there represented as it is in reality, this world would be a paradise, and we might all be happy."

"So, then, you think poverty the only evil in life?" asked Miss St. Clair.

"No. I spoke idly;—not the only one; but——" she blushed, and the tears stood in her eyes, as in a low voice she added, "but the only one I have ever known;" then, as if ashamed of having said so much, she turned away her head.

For a moment Gertrude was at a loss to understand her cousin's meaning; but it presently struck her that she must have formed some attachment where poverty was the obstacle; and she would have continued the conversation in hopes of gaining her

confidence, but at that moment the Major and Miss Bell, having retraced their steps in search of their companions, interposed.

"We thought we had lost you!" exclaimed the lady. "Major, will you give my cousin your other arm?—the descent is very steep now."

Gertrude declined the proffered aid, which she thought more likely to encumber than accelerate her movements; and, besides, she wished to renew the conversation with Anne, but in vain. The lovers, having exhausted their silly talk for the present, were now glad of a little variety, and they kept all close together till they reached the Holm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"The great use of delineating absurdities is, that we may know how far human folly can go; the account, therefore, ought, of absolute necessity, to be faithful."—JOHNSON.

THE first appearance of the Holm was highly prepossessing. It was a large, handsome-looking house, situated in a well-wooded park, by the side of a broad placid river, and an air of seclusion and stillness reigned all round, which impressed the mind with images of peace and repose. The interior of the house was no less promising; there was a spacious hall and a handsome staircase, with all appliances to boot; but as they approached the drawing-room, all the luxurious indolence of thought inspired by the tranquillity of the scenery was quickly dispelled by the discordant sounds which issued from thence, and, when the door was thrown open, the footman in vain attempted to announce the visitors. In the middle of the room all the chairs were collected to form a coach and horses for the Masters and Misses Fairbairn. One unruly-looking urchin sat in front, cracking a long whip with all his might; another acted as guard behind, and blew a shrill trumpet with all his strength:

while a third, in a night-cap and flannel lappet, who had somewhat the air of having quarrelled with the rest of the party, paraded up and down, in solitary majesty, beating a drum. On a sofa sat Mrs. Fairbairn, a soft, fair, genteel-looking woman, with a crying child of about three years old at her side, tearing paper into shreds, seemingly for the delight of littering the carpet, which was already strewed with headless dolls, tailless horses, wheelless carts, etc. As she rose to receive her visitors it began to scream.

"I'm not going away, Charlotte, love—don't be frightened," said the fond mother, with a look of ineffable pleasure.

"You no get up—you shan't get up," screamed Charlotte, seizing her mother's gown fiercely to detain her.

"My darling, you'll surely let me go to speak to uncle—good uncle, who brings you pretty things, you know;"—but, during this colloquy, uncle and the ladies had made their way to the enthralled mother, and the bustle of a meeting and introduction was got over. Chairs were obtained by the footman with some difficulty, and placed as close to the mistress of the house as possible, aware that otherwise it would not be easy to carry on even question and answer amid the tumult that reigned.

"You find us rather noisy, I am afraid," said Mrs. Fairbairn, with a smile, and in a manner which evidently meant the reverse; "but this is Saturday, and the children are all in such spirits, and they won't

stay away from me. Henry, my dear, don't crack your whip quite so loud—there's a good boy; that's a new whip his papa brought him from London, and he's so proud of it! William, my darling, don't you think your drum must be tired now? If I were you I would give it a rest. Alexander, your trumpet makes *rather* too much noise—one of these ladies has got a headache; wait till you go out, there's my good boy, and then you'll blow it at the cows and the sheep, you know, and frighten them. Oh! how you'll frighten them with it!"

"No, I'll not blow it at the cows; I'll blow it at the horses, because then they'll think it's the mail-coach." And he was running off, when Henry jumped down from the coach-box.

"No, but you shan't frighten them with your trumpet, for I shall frighten them with my whip. Mamma, aren't horses best frightened with a whip?" and a struggle ensued.

"Well, don't fight, my dears, and you shall both frighten them," cried their mamma.

"No, I'm determined he shan't frighten them; I shall do it," cried both together, as they rushed out of the room, and the drummer was preparing to follow.

"William, my darling, don't you go after these naughty boys; you know they're always very bad to you. You know they wouldn't let you into their coach with your drum." Here William began to cry. "Well, never mind, you shall have a coach of your own—a much finer coach than theirs; I wouldn't go

into their ugly dirty coach; and you shall have——" Here something of a consolatory nature was whispered, William was comforted, and even prevailed upon to relinquish his drum for his mamma's ivory workbox, the contents of which were soon scattered on the floor.

"These boys are gone without their hats," cried Mrs. Fairbairn in a tone of distress. "Eliza, my dear, pull the bell for Sally to get the boys' hats." Sally being despatched with the hats, something like a calm ensued in the absence of he of the whip and the trumpet; but as it will be of short duration, it is necessary to take advantage of it in improving the introduction into an acquaintance with the Fairbairn family.

Mrs. Fairbairn was one of those ladies who, from the time she became a mother, ceased to be anything else. All the duties, pleasures, charities, and decencies of life were henceforth concentrated in that one grand characteristic; every object in life was henceforth viewed through that single medium. Her own mother was no longer her mother; she was the grandmamma of her dear infants, her brothers and sisters were mere uncles and aunts, and even her husband ceased to be thought of as her husband from the time he became a father. He was no longer the being who had claims on her time, her thoughts, her talents, her affections; he was simply Mr. Fairbairn, the noun masculine of Mrs. Fairbairn, and the father of her children. Happily for Mr. Fairbairn, he was not a person of very nice

feelings or refined taste; and although at first he did feel a little unpleasant when he saw how much his children were preferred to himself, yet in time he became accustomed to it, then came to look upon Mrs. Fairbairn as the most exemplary of mothers, and finally resolved himself into the father of a very fine family, of which Mrs. Fairbairn was the mother. In all this there was more of selfish egotism and animal instinct than of rational affection or Christian principle; but both parents piqued themselves upon their fondness for their offspring, as if it were a feeling peculiar to themselves, and not one they shared in common with the lowest and weakest of their species. Like them, too, it was upon the bodies of their children that they lavished their chief care and tenderness, for, as to the immortal interests of their souls, or the cultivation of their minds, or the improvement of their tempers, these were but little attended to, at least in comparison of their health and personal appearance.

Alas! if there be "not a gem so precious as the human soul," how often do these gems seem as pearls cast before swine; for how seldom is it that a parent's greatest care is for the immortal happiness of that being whose precarious, and at best transient existence engrosses their every thought and desire! But perhaps Mrs. Fairbairn, like many a foolish ignorant mother, did her best, and had she been satisfied with spoiling her children herself for her own private amusement, and not have drawn in her visitors and

acquaintances to share in it, the evil might have passed uncensured. But Mrs. Fairbairn, instead of shutting herself up in her nursery, chose to bring her nursery down to her drawing-room, and instead of modestly denying her friends an entrance into her purgatory, she had a foolish pride in showing herself in the midst of her angels. In short, as the best things, when corrupted, always become the worst, so the purest and tenderest of human affections, when thus debased by selfishness and egotism, turn to the most tiresome and ridiculous of human weaknesses,—a truth but too well exemplified by Mrs. Fairbairn.

"I have been much to blame," said she, addressing Miss Bell, in a soft, whining, sick-child sort of voice, "for not having been at Bellevue long ago; but dear little Charlotte has been so plagued with her teeth I could not think of leaving her, for she is so fond of me she will go to nobody else; she screams when her maid offers to take her, and she won't even go to her papa."

"Is that possible?" said the Major.

"I assure you it's very true—she's a very naughty girl sometimes," bestowing a long and rapturous kiss on the child. "Who was it that beat poor papa for taking her from mamma last night? Well, don't cry—no, no, it wasn't my Charlotte. She knows every word that's said to her, and did from the time she was only a year old."

"That is wonderful!" said Miss Bell; "but how is my little favourite Andrew?"

"He is not very stout yet, poor little fellow, and we must be very careful of him." Then turning to Miss St. Clair—"Our little Andrew has had the measles, and you know the dregs of the measles are a serious thing—much worse than the measles themselves. Andrew—Andrew Waddell, my love, come here and speak to the ladies." And thereupon Andrew Waddell, in a night-cap, riding on a stick, drew near. Being the Major's namesake, Miss Bell, in the ardour of her attachment, thought proper to coax Andrew Waddell on her knee, and even to open her watch for his entertainment.

"Ah! I see who spoils Andrew Waddell," cried the delighted mother.

The Major chuckled; Miss Bell disclaimed, and for the time Andrew Waddell became the hero of the piece; the *blains* of the measles were carefully pointed out, and all his sufferings and sayings duly recapitulated. At length Miss Charlotte, indignant at finding herself eclipsed, began to scream and cry with all her strength.

"It's her teeth, darling little thing," said her mother, caressing her.

"I'm sure it's her teeth, sweet little dear," said Miss Bell.

"It undoubtedly must be her teeth, poor little girl," said the Major.

"If you will feel her gum," said Mrs. Fairbairn, putting her own finger into the child's mouth, "you will feel how hot it is."

This was addressed in a sort of general way to the company, none of whom seemed eager to avail themselves of the privilege, till the Major stepped forward, and having with his forefinger made the circuit of Miss Charlotte's mouth, gave it as his decided opinion that there was a tooth actually cutting the skin. Miss Bell followed the same course, and confirmed the interesting fact—adding, that it appeared to her to be "an uncommon large tooth."

At that moment Mr. Fairbairn entered, bearing in his arms another of the family, a fat, sour, new-waked-looking creature, sucking its finger. Scarcely was the introduction over—"There's a pair of legs!" exclaimed he, holding out a pair of thick purple stumps with red worsted shoes at the end of them, "I don't suppose Miss St. Clair ever saw legs like these in France; these are porridge and milk legs, are they not, Bobby?"

But Bobby continued to chew the cud of his own thumb in solemn silence.

"Will you speak to me, Bobby?" said Miss Bell, bent upon being amiable and agreeable; but still Bobby was mute.

"We think this little fellow rather long of speaking," said Mr. Fairbairn; "we allege that his legs have ran away with his tongue."

"How old is he?" asked the Major.

"He is only nineteen months and ten days," answered his mother, "so he has not lost much time; but I would rather see a child fat and thriving than have it very forward."

"No comparison!" was here uttered in a breath by the Major and Miss Bell.

"There's a great difference in children in their time of speaking," said the mamma. "Alexander didn't speak till he was two and a quarter; and Henry, again, had a great many little words before he was seventeen months; and Eliza and Charlotte both said mamma as plain as I do at a year; but girls always speak sooner than boys; as for William Pitt and Andrew Waddell, the twins, they both suffered so much from their teething that they were longer of speaking than they would otherwise have been; indeed, I never saw an infant suffer so much as Andrew Waddell did; he had greatly the heels of William Pitt at one time, till the measles pulled him down."

A movement was here made by the visitors to depart.

"Oh! you mustn't go without seeing the baby," cried Mrs. Fairbairn. "Mr. Fairbairn, will you pull the bell twice for baby?"

The bell was twice rung, but no baby answered the summons.

"She must be asleep," said Mrs. Fairbairn; "but I will take you up to the nursery, and you will see her in her cradle." And Mrs. Fairbairn led the way to the nursery, and opened the shutter, and uncovered the cradle, and displayed the baby.

"Just five months—uncommon fine child—the image of Mr. Fairbairn—fat little thing—neat little hands—sweet little mouth—pretty little nose—nice

little toes," etc. etc. etc., were as usual whispered over it.

Miss St. Clair flattered herself the exhibition was now over, and was again taking leave, when, to her dismay, the squires of the whip and the trumpet rushed in, proclaiming that it was pouring of rain! To leave the house was impossible, and, as it was getting late, there was nothing for it but staying dinner.

The children of this happy family always dined at table, and their food and manner of eating were the only subjects of conversation. Alexander did not like mashed potatoes, and Andrew Waddell could not eat broth, and Eliza could live upon fish, and William Pitt took too much small-beer, and Henry ate as much meat as his papa; and all these peculiarities had descended to them from some one or other of their ancestors. The dinner was simple on account of the children, and there was no dessert, as Bobby did not agree with fruit. But to make amends, Eliza's sampler was shown, and Henry and Alexander's copy-books were handed round the table, and Andrew Waddell stood up and repeated—"My name is Norval," from beginning to end, and William Pitt was prevailed upon to sing the whole of "God save the King," in a little squeaking mealy voice, and was bravoed and applauded as though he had been Braham himself.

To paint a scene in itself so tiresome is doubtless but a poor amusement to my reader, who must often have endured similar persecution. For who has not

suffered from the obtrusive fondness of parents for their offspring? and who has not felt what it was to be called upon, in the course of a morning visit, to enter into all the joys and the sorrows of the nursery, and to take a lively interest in all the feats and peculiarities of the family? Shakespeare's anathema against those who hated music is scarcely too strong to be applied to those who dislike children. There is much enjoyment sometimes in making acquaintance with the little beings—much delight in hearing their artless, unsophisticated prattle, and something not unpleasing even in witnessing their little freaks and wayward humours; but when a tiresome mother, instead of allowing the company to notice her child, torments every one to death in forcing or coaxing her child to notice the company, the charm is gone, and we experience only disgust or ennui.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairbairn pursued to its utmost extent this fatal rock on which so many parents make shipwreck of their senses; and so satisfied were they with themselves and their children, so impressed with the idea of the delights of their family scenes, that vain would have been any attempt to open the eyes of their understanding. Perhaps the only remedy would have been found in that blessed spirit which "vaunteth not itself, and seeketh not its own."

The evening proved fine; and Gertrude rejoiced to return even to Bellevue.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Il y en a peu qui gagnent à être approfondies."
LA BRUYERE.

"WHAT a sweet woman your sister is!" said Miss Bell, who at present beheld every objeet connected with the Major tinged with "Love's proper hue."

"I am very glad you like her," replied the delighted lover; "and I flatter myself the longer your know her the more you will be pleased with her."

"Oh, I have no doubt of that," said the lady.

"You will find her always the same," continued the Major.

"That is delightful!" said Miss Bell; "and what a charming family she has—it is really quite a treat to see them. I assure you I don't know when I have passed so pleasant a day."

"I trust you will pass many such," returned the Major, brightening still more. "I flatter myself my sister and you will be sisters indeed."

While this colloquy was carrying on betwixt the lovers, Miss St. Clair tried to bring her cousin Anne back to the subject of their morning's conversation;

but Anne seemed either afraid or ashamed of having said so much, and rather shunned any renewal of the subject. Gertrude did not think the worse of her upon that account, but rather gave her credit for that delicacy of mind which made her shrink from making a confidante of one who, although a relation, was in fact almost a stranger to her.

"It would be folly in me, my dear cousin," said she, "to make a parade of offering to assist you at present in any way. I am neither old nor wise enough to advise, and I am quite as poor and as powerless as you can possibly be; but if ever the time should come when I have either wisdom or power—both I can never hope to have together," said she with a smile,—"promise that you will then riddle me right, and tell me why poverty is the greatest misfortune in the world."

They were here interrupted by a band of young Blacks, who, having descried them from the window, had rushed out to meet them, all breathless with haste, to hear where they had been, and to proclaim that Bob and Davy were arrived; and upon advancing a little farther, Bob and Davy presented themselves in *propriis personis.* Bob and Davy were two tall good-looking youths, dressed in all the extremes of the reigning fashions—small waists, brush-heads, stiff collars, iron heels and switches. Like many other youths they were decidedly of opinion that dress "makes the man, and want of it the fellow," and that the rest was "mere leather and prunella." Perhaps,

after all, that is a species of humility rather to be admired in those who, feeling themselves destitute of mental qualifications, trust to the abilities of their tailor and hairdresser for gaining them the good-will of the world.

And who can tell whether there may not be more true lowliness of mind in a mop-head and high-heeled boots than has been lodged in many a pilgrim's scallopped hat and sandalled shoon? Be that as it may, it was evident that Bob and Davy rested their claims to distinction solely on the outward man, and that the sentiment of Henry the Fifth was by no means theirs,—

> "It yearns me not that men my garments wear,
> Such outward things dwell not in my desire," etc.

Introduced to their cousin, and the first ceremonials over, Bob and Davy each began to play his part. Bob, being a military man, talked of parades, reviews, mess-dinners, and regulation epaulettes—while Davy, the writer's apprentice, was loud upon Edinburgh belles, playhouse rows, Assembly Rooms, and new quadrilles.

"We are to be reviewed on the 27th," said Bob, addressing his cousin. "Gunstown is only about thirty miles from this. I hope you will do us the honour to come and look at us—we shall give a ball and supper after it; my mother and the girls will of course be there. Bell, you will be at our turn-out, won't you?"

"I wonder how you can ask such a question, Bob,

of a person in my situation," said Miss Bell, with dignity.

"What a famous deal of fun we had in Edinburgh last winter," said Davy; "I was very often at three balls in a night. You dance *queydrills* of course; country-dances are quite exploded now in Edinburgh—they call them kitchen dances there; there's nothing goes down now but *walltsays* and *queydrills*. By-the-bye, I daresay we could make out a queydrill here. Bell, do you dance queydrills?"

"I never heard of a person in my situation dancing," replied Miss Bell, with an air of contempt.

"Ay, that's always the way whenever you Misses get husbands, you grow so confoundedly stupid; but I shall not suffer my wife to give herself such airs, I can tell you. I shall make a point of her dancing every night."

The brothers had come on purpose to be present at the celebration of the nuptials, which they merely thought of as Bell's going off—a consummation to be devoutly wished for in a family of eleven, and an event indissolubly united in their minds with new coats, white gloves, wedding favours, bridesmaids, capital dinners, jovial suppers, dances, flirtations, and famous fun. Such being Bob and Davy, it may be inferred they were no great acquisitions to the family party, though they certainly were additions to it. Under the mistaken idea of being too genteel to do anything for themselves, there was a constant ringing of bells, and calling for this, that, and t'other; and if

the hapless foot-boy could have cut himself into a thousand pieces, and endowed each particular piece with locomotive powers, all would scarcely have sufficed to answer the demands made upon him. Then, without any bad temper, there was a constant jangling and jarring from mere vacancy of mind, and want of proper pursuit. They were all warmly attached to each other in a disagreeable way; and, upon the strength of that attachment, thought they might dispense with all the ordinary rules of politeness, and contradict and dispute with each other upon the most trifling occasion. In short, it was not a pleasant dwelling-place; there was neither the peace and tranquillity which the true spirit of Christianity diffuses amongst its votaries, nor the refined courtesies which spring from cultivated minds and elegant habits. Anne, indeed, was an exception; but she was so quiet and pensive that she was completely sunk in the commotion that prevailed.

Miss St. Clair suffered particularly from the assiduities of the two beaux, being both bent on engaging her in a flirtation; but their attentions were received with so much coldness, at times even amounting to *hauteur*, that at length they discovered that their old flames Cecy Swan and Clemmy Dow were much prettier girls, and to Cecy Swan and Clemmy Dow they accordingly betook themselves.

Heartily tired of Bellevue and its inhabitants, Gertrude longed impatiently for the marriage day, that she might return to Rossville. She felt anxious,

too, about her mother, and the thoughts of the mystery in which she was involved disquieted her, and rendered her situation doubly irksome. Unconsciously she cherished the desire of penetrating that dread secret, although, with the natural thoughtlessness and gaiety of youth, her mind was often diverted from the contemplation of it; yet there were times when it gained an almost overwhelming ascendency over her, and she thought she could have easier have endured any known evil than have submitted herself to this unknown fear. In Colonel Delmour's company, indeed, every painful idea was suspended, and she gave herself up to the charms of his brilliant conversation and varied powers of pleasing with a complete forgetfulness of everything, save the consciousness of loving and being beloved, while at the same time, with all the delusion of passion, she yet closed her eyes against the light of conviction. But his visits became too frequent and too long not to call forth some animadversion in the family, who had been led by Lord Rossville to look upon her as the affianced bride of the elder brother.

But all were too busy with the substantials of marriage to have much time to bestow on the empty speculations of love. Mr. Black had settlements to read over and sign, etc. Mrs. Black had the innumerable departments of mother and housekeeper to fill—duties which are always trebled tenfold upon such momentous occasions.

All the powers of Bob and Davy's minds were

exerted to the decoration of their persons; but all the emanations of their genius had proved insufficient to enlighten the understanding of the Barnford tailor. Bob's coat was sent home when too late for alterations at least half an inch too long, while Davy's waistcoat was as much too short. The young ladies' gowns pleased better, and the children were charmed with their respective suits and sashes. As for Miss Bell, she was like some bright planet, the centre of its own system, round which all inferior orbs revolve. She it was to whom all must look for bridecake, and gloves, and favours, and all such minor consolations as fall to the lot of the single on such occasions. But no one's cup, however it may froth and mantle, is ever full, even to the overflowing. Miss Bell's certainly seemed to foam to the very top, but it could still have held a little more. Many were the wedding presents she had received from kindred and friends, according to their various means, till her chamber might have vied with the shrine of some patron saint. But amidst all the votive offerings there was none from Uncle Adam, although she had settled in her own mind that Uncle Adam could not possibly avoid presenting her with something very handsome, whether in plate, jewels, or specie, and her only doubt was, which of the three she would prefer. However, time wore on, and Uncle Adam was only to be seen in his usual attitude, with his hands in his pockets, as if strictly guarding his money, and with a face of the most hopeless sourness. Miss Bell, notwithstanding, still kept up under the

expectation that Uncle Adam would surprise her in his own rough queer way some day, when she was not thinking of it. When that day would be it would have been difficult to say, as there was no day in which she was not fully prepared for the surprise.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner."—SHAKESPEARE.

THE day previous to the marriage the bustle that reigned in and around Bellevue was increased to that intense degree which attends all great events as they approach towards their consummation. Uncle Adam, Miss Black, and Mr. and Mrs. Fairbairn were expected at dinner, and during the whole day the steam of the soups, pies, pasties, etc. etc., which issued from Mrs. Black's kitchen and penetrated to the very interior of the drawing-room, might (as some one has parodied it) have created a stomach beneath the ribs of death. To Gertrude the commotion caused by what is called giving a dinner was something new. The total *bouleversement* of all orders of the community where much was to be done without the proper means, where a sumptuous banquet was to be prepared by the common drudges of the kitchen, and where every servant had double their usual portion of work to perform, besides being thrown out of their own natural sphere of action. Then there was the running backwards and forwards, the flying up stairs and the rushing down stairs, the opening and shutting of doors, or rather, I should say,

the opening of doors, as the shutting is an evil seldom to be complained of upon any occasion, unless, indeed, when the call of "shut the door" is answered with a slam which shakes the house to its foundation. Added to all this was the losing of Mrs. Black's keys, with the customary suspicions attached to every individual of having somehow or other got them about them—suspicions only to be removed by repeated raisings and shakings of the party suspected, and even then not completely effaced, till the keys were found as usual in some place where somebody must surely have put them, and where nobody would ever have thought of looking for them.

Then the nurserymaid was transformed into the cook's assistant, and the children were committed to a girl who could not manage them, and they broke loose, and overran the house, and resisted all authority. But doubtless many of my readers must have witnessed similar scenes, and endured similar persecutions, pending the preparations for a dinner, which, like worthy Mrs. Black's, was to be about three times as large and as elaborate as was necessary. But many are the paths to the temple of Fame, and hard it is to climb by any of them. Mrs. Black was chiefly emulous of a character for her dinners, and probably laboured infinitely harder to stuff a dozen dull bodies than the Author of Waverley does to amuse the whole world. It was for this she thought by night and toiled by day; but, strange to say, she had an enjoyment in it too, though when that was, it would

have been difficult to determine, for the anticipation was care and fatigue, the reality was ceremony and anxiety, the retrospect was disappointment and provocation.

Uncle Adam was the first of the guests who arrived, and Miss St. Clair was the only one of the family ready to receive him. She was in the drawing-room when he entered, and the habitual vinegar expression of his long triangular visage relaxed into something like a smile at sight of her; he even seated himself by her side, and entered into conversation with a degree of complacency very unusual with him.

Emboldened by his good-humour, Gertrude ventured to admire a very fine camellia japonica, which, together with a piece of his favourite southernwood, decorated the breast of his coat.

"I ken naething aboot the things mysel'," said he, hastily tearing it out of the button-hole, as if ashamed of wearing anything to be admired; then stuffing it into her hand—"Ha'e, tak' it, my dear; it cam' frae that place up bye"—pointing in the direction of Bloom Park. "I'm sure they need nae ha'e sent it to me. What ca' ye it?"

Gertrude repeated the name.

"It's a senseless-like thing, without ony smell,"—applying the southernwood to his nose as he spoke; "but I daresay there's plenty o' them, and I've nae use for them, so you may gang up bye when you like, and tak' what you like."

Gertrude thanked him, and as she adjusted the

japonica in her dress, the old garnet brooch, now her only ornament, fell out, and in his gallantry the old man stooped to pick it up. But no sooner had he taken it in his hand than he uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and turning it over and over, examined it with the deepest interest.

"Wha's aught this?" inquired he.

"It is mine," replied Gertrude, in some surprise.

"Yours!" repeated he; "yours! and whar did ye get it? tell me the truth, whar did ye get it?"

"I got it from my nurse; she gave it to me when she was dying, and I have kept it for her sake."

"And did she no tell you whar she had got it?"

"I think she said she had got it from her mother."

"From *her* mother! it was ance my mother's—it was mine, and I gi'ed it to Lizzy wi' my ain hands whan last we parted, and she promised to keep it till her dying day; there's our initials"—pointing to the back—"and the very year we parted."——Then, after a long pause—"What was the name o' your nurse, and whar did she come frae?"

"Her own name was Marianne Lamotte; her husband's Jacob Lewiston, and she came from America; her father was French; but, I believe, her mother was Scotch, for she used to sing me many an old Scotch song, which she said she had learned from her."

"I canna mak' it oot," said Mr. Ramsay thoughtfully; "but it disna signify; though I could, it wadna bring back life and time;" and with a sigh he tendered the brooch.

"Pray, keep it," said Gertrude; "it seems you have a better right to it than I have. I valued it merely for the sake of my nurse; but it is a still dearer memorial to you, and therefore I willingly part with it."

"No, no," said he, rejecting the hand that offered it; "what wad I do wi't? At your age, you may please yoursel' wi' thae kind o' dead toys, but I'm ow'r auld noo to ha'e ony enjoyment in sic things; the young may tak' pleasure in thae romantic gew-gaws; ye like to look back whan ye ha'e nae far to cast your eye; but at threescore and ten it's a dreigh sight to see the lang and weary road we ha'e wandered. No, no, there's nae pleasure to the aged in sic mementoes; they canna bring back youthfu' days and youthfu' hearts, and they are the only jewels o' life."

Gertrude could not urge it, but from a feeling of delicacy towards her uncle's painful reminiscences, she put aside the trinket, and resolved never again to wear it in his presence. It is rarely that feelings raised above the ordinary pitch can be long indulged in this strange world, where the most opposite emotions are constantly coming in contact, and where the mind is for ever in a state of ebb and flow.

Mr. Ramsay's nature had been softened, and all its best ingredients called forth, at sight of the love-token of his early days, and the mournful associations which followed in its train; but the gentler current of his soul was speedily checked by the entrance of the various members of the family, as they came severally

dropping in, fresh from their toilets, and last, if not least, Uncle Adam's antipathy, Miss Bell.

Squeezing herself on the little sofa between Miss St. Clair and him, she exclaimed, "What a beautiful flower that is, cousin! where did you get it?"

"Mr. Ramsay was so good as to give it to me," answered she.

"Indeed! I suppose, then, it is from Bloom Park, uncle? You have charming greenhouses there, I understand—that is what I regret so much at Thornbank. You know the Major has taken that in the meantime; but I don't think it will answer, as there are no hothouses, and the Major has been accustomed to such charming fruits in India, that I'm afraid he will miss his pines sadly."

"I suppose there will be plenty o' gude neeps," said Mr. Ramsay; "neeps like succur—he can take ane o' them when he's dry."

Miss Bell reddened, but affecting not to hear, returned to the charge.

"Thornbank is no great distance from Bloom Park, uncle,—quite an easy walk, I should think."

"I never measured it," was the laconic reply.

Finding it was not by way of Bloom Park she was likely to arrive at Uncle Adam's pocket, Miss Bell now went more directly to the point.

"Do you know, uncle, I could be almost jealous of my cousin for having got that beautiful japonica from you, while poor I have not so much as a single leaf from you by way of keepsake."

Mr. Ramsay, with a bow and a sardonic smile, here presented her with the piece of southernwood he held in his hand.

"Well, uncle, I assure you I shall value this very much, and lay it up with the rest of my wedding presents; and, by-the-bye, I have never showed you all the fine things my kind friends have presented to me. Good old Mrs. Waddell of Waddell Mains has presented me with a most beautiful antique silver cup, which, it seems, was the Major's christening bowl."

"It will be ancient enough then, nae doot," observed Uncle Adam.

"My excellent aunts have sent me a very handsome teapot, and——"

"A fool and his money's soon parted; they had very little to do to send ony such thing."

"Why, surely, uncle, you know it is the custom, all the world over, for persons in my situation to receive presents, and——"

"Miss Bell Black, I've seen something mair o' the world than you've done; and I can tell ye some o' its customs that ye maybe dinna ken yet; in Russia, for instance, the present to persons in your situation is——"

"Oh! for Heaven's sake!"—interrupted Miss Bell, with an instinctive dread of the knout—"don't set up these bears as models for us! the customs of our own country surely ought to guide us on these occasions."

"It's a very senseless custom, in my opinion," said Mr. Ramsay. "It's like casting pearls before swine

to be lavishing presents on a woman that's at the very pinnacle o' human happiness and grandeur; it's you that should mak' presents to puir single folk that hae nae Major Waddells to set them up wi' Ingee shawls, and carbuncles, and fans—and——oo, I can compare ye to naething but a goddess the noo; let me see, which o' them is't? A Juno? Na, I'm thinkin' it'll rather be a *Vainass.*"

Here Uncle Adam was so tickled with his own *jeu de mot* that he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. The insult was too broad even for Miss Bell, who walked away in silent indignation; then recovering himself, he pointed after her to Gertrude, and said,—

"That creature's folly's just like dust—drive it out o' ae thing, and it just flees to anither."

Miss Black was the next of the party who arrived, and Gertrude, attracted by her mildness and good sense, would fain have exchanged the gall and vinegar of Uncle Adam for her more pleasing converse. But the obstreperous mirth of the children, and the noisy tattle of Bob and Davy, effectually precluded any interchange of speech beyond the ordinary salutations of meeting. The Fairbairn family (including the Major) were now waited for with outward impatience by Mr. Black, with inward anxiety by Mrs. Black. Mr. Black openly avowed his hunger; Mrs. Black vainly endeavoured to disguise her apprehensions that the beef would be roasted to a cinder (a thing Mr. Black could not endure), and that the rice (which

the Major was so particular about) would be all in a lump, instead of being—as well-boiled rice ought to be—each and every particular grain separate by itself. All this, and much more, poor Mrs. Black revolved in her own mind, as she sat, like a second Mrs. Blue Beard, ever and anon calling to the children to look out and see if they saw anybody coming.

At length the Fairbairn coach was descried and loudly proclaimed. The bell was rung—the dinner was ordered. Bob and Davy were ordered out of two arm-chairs they had taken possession of. Mrs. Black smoothed her gown, and put on a ceremonious face, while Mr. Black hastened to the door to be ready to receive Mrs. Fairbairn with due respect. But no Mrs. Fairbairn was there; in her stead, however, was Miss Becky Duguid, her cousin; and the cause of Mrs. Fairbairn's absence was accounted for by reason of poor little Charlotte having been very cross all day, and her mamma thinking there was a tooth coming; and she would not leave her mamma, and her mamma could not leave her, etc. etc. etc. All this was duly set forth by Mr. Fairbairn on one hand, while Miss Becky was making her own personal apologies on the other. She was really such a figure, she was quite ashamed to appear; but she had no idea of coming, for it had been all settled that she was to stay with Charlotte while Mrs. Fairbairn was away; and at one time Charlotte had agreed to let her mamma go; and her mamma had dressed herself, and was all ready to set out; and then she took a crying fit

when the carriage was at the door, and so her mamma was obliged to give up the point and stay at home; and then Mr. Fairbairn had insisted on her coming in Mrs. Fairbairn's place, just as she was. Miss Becky's apologies were of course met with protestations that there was no occasion for any, that she was perfectly well dressed, that it was merely a family dinner, an easy party, none but friends, and so forth. But, to tell the truth, Miss Becky's dress did require an apology, for the marks of children's fingers were upon her gown; her cap looked as if it had been sat upon, and her shawl even bore symptoms of having served to play at bo-peep! In short, Miss Becky had the *tout ensemble* of a poor elderly maiden aunt; and such, indeed, was her history and character, as it is, alas! of many others; but a slight sketch may serve to describe the *genus*, and serve as a tolerably faithful picture of *Auntimony.*

CHAPTER XXX.

"How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!"

POPE.

MISS BECKY DUGUID, as a single woman, had vainly expected to escape the cares and anxieties of the married state. She had heard and seen much of the indifference or the ill-humour of husbands, of the troubles and vexations of children; and she thought from these evils I am at least free; I can go where I like, do what I like, and live as I like. But poor Miss Becky soon found her mistake. Brothers and sisters married; nephews and nieces sprung up on all hands, each and all expecting to be distinguished by Aunt Becky's bounty, while every parent levied the most unconscionable taxes upon her time and capabilities.

"Aunt Becky will give me this," said one; "you know she has no use for money."

"Aunt Becky will do that," said another; "for she has always plenty of time."

"Aunt Becky will go there," cried a third; "she likes a long walk."

But even the labours imposed upon her by her own relations were nothing compared to the constant demands made upon her by the world in general, *i.e.* by the whole circle of her acquaintances;—all under the idea that, as a single woman, she could have nothing to do but oblige her friends. When in town, her life was devoted to executing commissions from the country—inquiring the character of servants, hiring governesses and grooms, finding situations for wet nurses, getting patterns of pelisse cloths from every shop in town, trying to get old silks matched with new, gowns made, gauzes dyed, feathers cleaned, fans mended, etc. etc. etc. The letters always beginning—"As I know you do not grudge your trouble, and will be walking about at any rate, I must beg the favour, when you are quite at leisure," and so and so; and ending with—"As I find I am really in want of the things, and the carrier leaves town on Thursday, I trust you will contrive to have everything ready by that time." But one of the letters, dropped by Miss Becky in the course of her perambulations, will best illustrate this part of her personal narrative.

"MY DEAR MISS BECKY—I take this opportunity of letting you know we are all tolerably well at present, and trust you continue to enjoy your usual good health. I return the tea you sent *last*, as we all think it very *inferior* to that you sent *formerly;* and as there has been rather a fall upon the price of teas, there can be

no reason for such a falling off in the quality; and unless Candytuft can give something *very superior* at the same price, I would just return it, and try some other shop, and have nothing more to do with Candytuft. Eliza and Jane, with their best love, take this opportunity of sending in their old black velvet pelisses, which they wish you to consult Yellowleys the dyer about; they have been told that black velvet can be *dyed* either grass green or *bright* crimson, and if Yellowleys can *warrant* their standing, they would prefer having them done a *good rich* crimson; but if not, they must just put up with a *full* green, as much *on* the grass, and *off* the bottle, as possible.

"I am sorry to tell you your *protégée*, Jenny Snodgrass, has turned out very ill. I find her lazy and idle, dirty, disobliging, and insolent, and not at all the person I was led to expect from your character of her. I must, therefore, trouble you to be on the lookout for another. You know it is not much I require of my servants; but there are *some* things it is impossible to dispense with, and which I must make a *point* of. Of course she must be perfectly sober, honest, conscientious, and trustworthy, and in *every* respect unexceptionable in her *morals*. She must be stout, active, cleanly, civil, obliging, quiet, orderly, good-tempered, neat-handed, and *particularly* tidy in her person. All that I require of her is to be an *excellent* worker at her needle, a *thorough* washer and ironer, and a *generally* useful and accommodating servant.

Margaret sends her affectionate remembrance, and when you are at leisure requests you will order a pair of stays for her from Brisbane's as soon as possible, as she is in *great* want. She sends a pair of old ones for a pattern, but they don't fit; you must tell him they are both too *tight* and too *short*, and the shoulder-straps too *narrow* by a *full* straw-breadth. The old busk, she thinks, may do, or if it should be too *short*, perhaps you may be able to get it exchanged for one *longer*. As Flint the gunsmith's is no great distance from Brisbane's, John would be much obliged to you when you are there, if you would step to him, and tell him that he is going to send his gun to have the lock mended, and to be sure to have it done in the most *complete* manner, and as soon as he possibly can, as the shooting-season is coming on. When done, he may send it to you, with a couple of pounds of gunpowder, and a bag of small shot, No. 5. As the holiday time is coming on, we may look for the boys some of these days, and (if it is not putting you to any inconvenience), as the coach stops, you know, at the Blue Boar, perhaps you will have the goodness to have your Nanny *waiting* at the office for them; and if you can manage to keep them till Monday it will be adding to the favour; but they will require *constant* watching, as you know what romps they are. I do not expect to be confined before the 29th at soonest; so if you can manage to come to us *betwixt* and the 20th, it will be very agreeable to us all, I assure you. I was in hopes I should not have had any

more to trouble you with at present, but upon hearing that I was writing to you, Tom begs me to say that he wishes very much to get some *good* fly-hooks for trout-fishing, four *red* cocks' hackle-body, four *black* green plover's-tuft, with a light starling's-wing body, and four *brown* woodcocks'-wing, and hare's-foot-body. I hope you will be able to *read* this, as I assure you it has cost me some labour to *write* it from Tom's diction. He desires me to add you will get them best at Phin's, fishing-rod-maker, at the *east* end of the High Street, *fifth* door up the *second* stair on the *left* hand; you will easily find it, as there is a large pasteboard trout hanging from the end of a fishing-rod for a sign. He also wants a pirn of fishing-line and a few good stout *long-shanked bait*-hooks. If you happen to see your friend Miss Aiken, you may tell her the turban you ordered for me is the *very same* of one she made for me *two years* ago, and which I never liked. I have only worn it *once*, so perhaps she will have no objections to take it back, and make me a *neat*, *fashionable* cap instead. I am afraid you will think us very troublesome, but I know you do not grudge a little trouble to oblige your friends. Mr. Goodwilly and the young people unite with me in best wishes; and I remain, my dear Miss Duguid,

"Yours most sincerely,

"GRACE GOODWILLY.

"P.S.—Eliza and Jane beg you will send them some patterns of summer silks, neither too *light* nor

too *dark*, both *figured* and *plain*, with the different *widths* and *prices*, and also that you would inquire what is the *lowest* price of the *handsomest* ostrich feathers that can be had; and if you happen to see any very pretty *wreaths* you might price them at the same time, as they are divided between feathers and flowers; those you sent from Trashbag's were quite *soiled*, and looked as if they had been *worn*. Mr. Goodwilly takes this opportunity of sending in a couple of razors, which he begs you will send to Steele the cutler's, at the back of the Old Kirk Stile, to be sharpened *immediately*, as that is a thing he *cannot* want. Margaret bids me tell you to desire Brisbane *not* to put *magic* laces to her stays, and to be sure that the stitching is stout and *firm*. Any day that you happen to be passing Seaton the saddler's, Mr. Goodwilly begs you will have the goodness to inquire what would be the lowest price of new stuffing the side saddles, and new lackering the carriage-harness. I think it as well to send in my turban, that you may try Miss Aiken, and I shall think her extremely *disobliging* if she refuses to take it back, as it will be *money* thrown into the *fire* if she does not, for it shall never go upon my head.

"Yours with much regard,

"G. G.

"P.S.—I find it will be necessary to send Jemima in to Bain the dentist, to get some of her teeth *taken out*, as her mouth is getting very *crowded*. I would

take her myself, but cannot stand these things; so must beg the favour of you to go with her, and *see* it done. I fear it will be a *sad* business, poor soul! as there are *at least three* that must come out, and *great* tusks they are! Of course, it is not every one I would *trust* her with for such an *operation:* but I know I can rely upon your doing everything that *can be done.* Will you ask that good-for-nothing creature, Heelpiece, if the children's shoes are *ever* to be sent home?

"Yours in haste."

Sometimes Miss Becky betook herself to the country, but though she often found retirement there was seldom rest. Whenever a gay husband was leaving home, Miss Becky was in requisition to keep his dull-sickly wife company in his absence — or, *vice versa,* when a young wife wished to amuse herself abroad, "that good creature, Becky Duguid," was sent for, to play backgammon with her old ill-natured husband; and when both man and wife were leaving home, then Becky Duguid was called upon to nurse the children and manage the servants in their absence. Invitations abounded, but all to disagreeable scenes or dull parties. She was expected to attend all *accouchements,* christenings, deaths, chestings, and burials; but she was seldom asked to a marriage, and never to any party of pleasure. "Oh, Miss Becky doesn't care for these things; she would like better to come to us when we're in a quiet way by ourselves," was always

the come off. "I don't know what the cares of the married life are," Miss Becky would sometimes say, and oftener think; "but I'm sure I know what the troubles of the single state are to a stout, healthy, easy-tempered woman like me. What is it to be the wife of one crabbed old man to having to divert all the crabbed old men in the country? And what is it to be the mother of one family of children to having to look after the children of all my relations and acquaintances?"

But Miss Becky's reflections (like most people's reflections) came too late to benefit herself. She was completely involved in the toils of celibacy before she was at all aware of her danger, and vain now would have been the attempt to extricate herself. Such was Miss Becky Duguid, walking in the vain show of liberty, but, in reality, fettered hand and foot by all the tender charities of life. As such, it may be guessed, she formed no very brilliant addition to the Bellevue party. Indeed, such is the force of habit, she now felt quite out of her element, when seated at her ease, without any immediate call on her time and attention; for even her little doings carried their sense of importance along with them; and perhaps Mrs. Fry never felt more inward satisfaction at the turning of a soul from darkness to light than did poor Miss Becky when she had triumphantly despatched a box full of *well-executed* commissions.

Dinner passed off uncommonly well; everything was excellent. Uncle Adam behaved with tolerable

civility; the Major's black servant did wonders; the room was hot, the party was large, the dishes were savoury, the atmosphere was one ambrosial cloud of mingled steams; the ladies' complexions got high; but at length, toasts having gone round, the signal was made, and all was over!

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bride,
  Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow;
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bride,
  And let us to the Braes of Yarrow.

"There will we sport and gather dew,
  Dancing while lav'rocks sing in the morning;
There learn frae turtles to prove true;
  Oh, Bell, ne'er vex me with thy scorning!"
ALLAN RAMSAY.

BRIGHT shone the morning of Miss Bell's nuptials, and all things looked auspicious. The collation stood ready, for Mrs. Black, like Lady Capulet on a similar though less happy occasion, had been astir from the second crowing of the cock.

The guests were assembled, the clergyman had arrived, the family were all in full dress; the Major, in his cat's-eye brooch and London coat (the envy of Bob and Davy), looked the gay bridegroom from top to toe. Nothing was wanting but the beauteous bride, and, at the proper moment, decked in India muslin—a full dressed head, done up with a profusion of beads, and braids, and bands, and bows—a pocket-handkerchief at her face, Miss Bell was led in.

The solemnity deepened; the clergyman cleared

his voice; the children were admonished by a reproving look that it was time to put on their grave faces; the clatter of Bob and Davy was hushed, and all the little disjointed groups were broken up, till at length the whole company was regularly formed into one large formal, silent, solemn circle. Miss Bell was now on the verge of becoming Mrs. Major Waddell—a metamorphose which could not be expected to take place without some commotion.

Persons of fine feelings naturally shed tears upon these momentous occasions, and persons of ordinary feelings think they ought to do so too. In short, the thing is always done, or appears to be done; and not to be outdone, Miss Bell sobbed aloud, and had even the vulgarity to blow her nose—although, as Bob and Davy afterwards declared, that was all in the eye.

Dr. Johnson has remarked of the Episcopal marriage service that it is too refined—that it is calculated only for the best kind of marriages; whereas there ought to be a form for matches of an inferior description, probably such as that which now took place betwixt Major Andrew Waddell and Miss Isabella Black. That objection certainly does not apply to the Presbyterian form, which depends entirely upon the officiating clergyman; and, accordingly, is susceptible of all the varieties of which the mind and manners of man are capable—from the holy meekness and simplicity of the Evangelical pastor, to the humdrum slipshod exhortations of the lukewarm minister

or the dull dogmas of the worldly-wise doctor. It was a person of the latter description who now performed the ceremony in a manner which even Dr. Johnson would scarcely have deemed too good for the parties.

Mrs. Major Waddell having received the congratulations of the company then withdrew, according to etiquette, to change her nuptial-robe for a travelling habit, and speedily re-entered, arrayed in a navy-blue riding-habit (the Major's favourite colour), allowed to sit uncommonly well; a black beaver hat and feathers, yellow boots, gold watch, and brooch containing the Major's hair, set round with pearls. Altogether, Mrs. Major Waddell looked remarkably well, and bore her new honours with a happy mixture of dignity and affability.

The company were now conducted to the banquet, which, though neither breakfast, dinner, or supper, was a happy combination of all. There was, of course, much cutting, and carving, and helping, and asking, and refusing, and even some pressing, and Will the foot-boy broke a decanter, and Black Cæsar spilt a very elaborate trifle; but, upon the whole, everything went on prosperously. Mrs. St. Clair took care to seat herself by the Major, and aware that when people are very happy they are commonly very weak, she seized her opportunity, and easily cajoled him out of his vote. And now the trampling of steeds and crush of wheels announced the bridal equipage; and the Major, his lady, and Miss Lilly,

who was to accompany them, prepared to depart. The lady, according to custom, was hurried, or appeared to be hurried, into the small carriage-and-four that awaited her. Miss Lilly followed; but as she took leave of Miss St. Clair, she whispered, "I should like very much to correspond with you, if ——" but here Lilly was dragged away by her father, with a reproof for keeping the young people waiting. The happy party were now seated, the door was shut, the smiles, and bows, and kissing of hands was renewed, the Major's black servant skipped on the dicky; "Go on," was pronounced, the drivers cracked their whips, the carriage set off with a bound, and was soon rattling through the streets of Barnford, where many a gazing eye and outstretched neck hailed it as it passed.

A great philosopher has asserted that "upon all such joyous occasions our satisfaction, though not so durable, is often as lively as that of the persons principally concerned;" but, upon the present occasion, there certainly was little sympathy in Mrs. Major Waddell's feelings and those of her friends and acquaintances. While she rolled on, supremely blest, they solaced themselves with commiserating her hapless fate. "Quite a mercenary marriage, poor thing; a sad sacrifice; a man old enough to be her grandfather, has met with seventeen refusals, fortune come in of the telling, liver like a plum-pudding, false teeth, dreadful temper," etc. etc., were buzzed from one end of the town to the other; but, happily, none

of their stings penetrated the ear of the bride, who sat in all the bliss of pompous ignorance.

Though births, marriages, and deaths occur every day, still they continue to excite an interest beyond the ordinary events of life. The former and the latter, indeed, though apparently more important occurrences, certainly do not engage the attention or occupy the minds of the great mass of mankind (or, at least, of womankind) so much as the less solemn act of marriage. Whether these, being performed without our own consent asked or obtained, afford less scope for animadversion, or that marriage is a state in which all are inclined to sympathise—the married from fellow-feeling, the single from feelings which the moralist or the metaphysician may declare, but which it is no part of my business to investigate, I shall, therefore, leave the point to be discussed by those who are more competent, and return to the company.

It is no easy matter for a party in full dress to pass away the morning when the business for which they assembled is over, and where there is nothing to gratify any one of the five senses; it is then people feel, in its fullest extent, the pains and penalties of idleness. As soon as their respective carriages drew up, the guests therefore dropped off, and, as the last of them wheeled out of sight, Mrs. Black thanked her stars she had seen all their backs.

CHAPTER XXXII.

> "Thou wilt be like a lover presently,
> And tire the hearer with a book of words."
> *Much Ado about Nothing.*

It was with pleasure Gertrude hailed the stately turrets of Rossville, as she beheld them rising above the rich masses of wood which surrounded them; and again her heart bounded with delight as she thought, "All this will one day be mine—mine to bestow——"

She did not finish the sentence even to herself, but the image of Colonel Delmour rose to her view, and she felt that even the brilliant destiny that awaited her would be poor and joyless unless he were to partake of it. On alighting, Mrs. St. Clair hastened to Lord Rossville to report to him the success of her canvass, and Gertrude soon found herself, she knew not how, strolling by the banks of the river with Colonel Delmour by her side.

It is universally allowed that, though nothing can be more interesting in itself than the conversation of two lovers, yet nothing can be more insipid in detail—just as the heavenly fragrance of the rose becomes vapid and sickly under all the attempts made to retain and embody its exquisite odour. Colonel Delmour

certainly was in love—as much so as it was in his nature to be; but, as has been truly said, how many noxious ingredients enter into the composition of what is sometimes called love! Pride, vanity, ambition, self-interest, all these had their share in the admiration which Colonel Delmour accorded to the beauties and the graces of Miss St. Clair. In any situation in life his taste would have led him to admire her; but it was only as the heiress of Rossville his pride would have permitted him to have loved her. But he was aware of the obstacles that stood in the way of his wishes, and deemed it most prudent not to oppose himself openly to them at present. He was conscious of the odium he would incur were he to enter the lists as the rival of his brother, knowing, as he had all along done, that that brother was the destined husband of the heiress of Rossville. His aim, therefore, was to secure her affections in a clandestine manner, leaving it to his brother to make his proposals openly, and when they had been rejected he would then come forward and prefer his suit. This manœuvre would, to be sure, expose Gertrude to the whole weight of her uncle's displeasure, and probably bring much persecution upon her, but with a character such as hers that would only tend to strengthen her attachment, and Colonel Delmour was too selfish to prize the happiness even of the woman he loved beyond his own; or rather, like many others of the same nature, he wished that her happiness should be of a reflected nature, emanating solely from himself.

Having bewailed the necessity he was under of leaving Rossville the following day, he then gave way to the most vehement expressions of despair at the thoughts of leaving one a thousand times dearer to him than life, and that, too, without the only solace that could soften the anguish of separation—the belief that his feelings were understood, the hope that they might one day be mutual.

Gertrude remained silent, but there was a deep struggle in her breast; her mother's prejudice, her uncle's plans, made her feel the dangers and difficulties of their attachment, while they at the same time served to heighten it. Colonel Delmour saw what was passing in her mind, and that he must now bring the matter to a decision.

With all the impassioned sophistry of which he was master he contrived to draw from Gertrude an indirect acknowledgment that he was not perfectly indifferent to her, and he then urged the necessity there was for carefully concealing their attachment for the present.

"Can this be right?" thought Gertrude, and her conscience told her no; but averse as she was to every species of dissimulation and deceit, she was equally a stranger to the meanness of suspicion, and to suspect the man she loved was not in her nature—love and suspicion were the very antipodes of her mind. She therefore quickly banished the slight suggestion that had arisen, though she could not so easily reconcile to herself the idea that she was acting a clandestine part

in thus deceiving by not disclosing to her mother what had passed. But Colonel Delmour besought her with so much earnestness to withhold the communication for the present, and she dreaded so much to encounter her mother's violence and prejudice, that perhaps, on the whole, she was not sorry for an excuse to indulge undisturbed yet a while in "Love's young dream." Had Mrs. St. Clair ever been the *friend* of her daughter, Gertrude would not have acted thus; for her nature was open and ingenuous, and she would have disdained every species of concealment and duplicity. But the whirlwind and the tempest are not more baleful in their effects on the material world than tyranny and violence are destructive of all the finer qualities of the mind with which they come in contact. They must either irritate or deaden all those free-born affections of the soul which, like the first vernal shoots, possess a charm in their freshness alone which art and culture would in vain seek to impart.

When the lovers reached the Castle, it was within a few minutes of the dinner hour, and Gertrude flew to her room, where she found her mother waiting for her.

"Where have you been, child?" cried she, in no very complacent tone. "Lord Rossville has been asking for you at least a dozen times, and no one could give any account of you."

"I have been walking by the river, mamma," replied her daughter in some confusion.

"I wish you would leave off these idle rambles of yours. I am quite of the Earl's opinion that the less young ladies indulge in solitary rambles the better."

"Mamma, I was not——" alone, Gertrude would have added, though in some little trepidation, but Mrs. St. Clair interrupted her.

"Come—come, there is no time to waste in excuses—you will be late as it is, so make haste; you ought to have remembered there is to be company here to-day, to whom Lord Rossville wished to present you in due pomp—perhaps to serve some little political purpose; but no matter—he is a generous, noble-minded man in spite of his little peculiarities. He was anxious to have seen you to-day for two purposes, which I am commissioned to fulfil; the first is, that you are to bestow your attention *exclusively* upon Mr. Delmour; the next is, to decorate you with a splendid gift for the occasion. Luckily you are in looks to do credit to my work. See, here is what your kind, generous uncle presents you with;" and opening a jewel-case, she displayed a set of costly pearls. A pang shot through Gertrude's heart as she thought, "Would he have bestowed these upon me if he had known that I am acting in opposition to his wishes? Oh! why am I compelled thus to play the hypocrite?" And she sighed and shrank back as her mother would have decked her in oriental magnificence. Mrs. St. Clair looked at her with astonishment.

"What is the matter, Gertrude?—this is a strange time to sigh, when adorning with gems which even

the future Countess of Rossville might be proud to wear."

Gertrude passively extended her arm to have the costly bracelets clasped on it; but Mrs. St. Clair knew not that to those who had just been plighting hearts, even Golconda's mines would have seemed poor and dim—at that moment Gertrude felt that wealth and honours were but as "painted clay."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

> "Is there place to write above one lover's name,
> With honour in her heart?"
>
> *Old Play.*

MEANWHILE the carriages were beginning to draw up in rapid succession, and Lord Rossville, though fretting inwardly at his niece's delay, yet received the company with much outward serenity. He felt that he was master of his own person and manners, and all the dignity and urbanity for which he flattered himself he was so celebrated had now full scope in the absence of Miss Pratt. His step was firmer, his chest was broader, his nose was higher, his language was finer, his sentences were longer, his periods were rounder—in short, Richard was himself again.

Already had he uttered many sensible and even some witty sayings to such of his guests as had arrived; while his mind was busy concocting a pun to be applied to Sir Peter Wellwood, when he should appear. But, alas for the insecurity of the best laid schemes of human wisdom! Sir Peter and Lady Wellwood were anounced; and—horror of horrors! —who should enter with them but Miss Pratt! Who can paint the Earl as he stood pierced with severe

amazement? Not Celadon, when he beheld his Amelia struck a blackened corse, gazed with more marble aspect than did his Lordship at sight of the breathing form of Miss Pratt. The half-formed pun died on his lips—a faint and indistinct notion of it floated through his bewildered brain; it was to have been something about a Well and a Wood, or a Wood and a Well; but the Earl's wits were in a wood; and he could certainly have wished Miss Pratt in a well. In vain did he even attempt to say something of Wellcome; the words clove to the roof of his mouth, and his looks did not make up for the deficiencies of his tongue. But Miss Pratt had not been looked at for fifty years to be disconcerted at that time of life by the looks of any man living, and she therefore accosted him in her usual manner.

"Well, my Lord, you see I've been better than my word; I daresay you didn't think of seeing me to-day; and, to tell you the truth, I didn't think of it myself; but Sir Peter and Lady Wellwood happened to call, *en passant*, at Lady M'Caw's, and as they were so good as offer me a seat in their carriage I thought I couldn't do better than just come and make out the rest of my visit to you, Lady Betty, Lady Mildmay, Lady Restall," etc. etc. etc.; and in a moment Miss Pratt was buzzing all round the room.

At sound of the gong, Mrs. St. Clair had hastily put the last finish to her daughter's dress, and hurried her to the drawing-room. As they entered all eyes were turned towards them. Lord Rossville was

struck with the surpassing beauty of his niece, and attributing it entirely to the effect of his pearls, he advanced from the circle in which he was standing, and taking her hand with an air of gratified pride, led her towards the company. He was in the act of presenting her to a Dowager-Marchioness, for whom he entertained a high veneration, when, at that moment, Mr. Lyndsay entered from the opposite side of the room. Their eyes met for the first time since that eventful midnight scene in the wood—a slight suffusion crossed his face, but in an instant the colour mounted to her very temples, and in answer to the Marchioness's introductory remarks, she stammered out she knew not what. The consciousness of her confusion only served to increase it; she was aware that the eyes of the company were upon her, but she *felt* only the influence of Colonel Delmour's.

Lord Rossville attributing his niece's embarrassment solely to awe and respect for himself and his guests, was beginning to reassure and encourage her in a manner which would have increased her confusion tenfold, when fortunately dinner was announced. Amid the usual bustle of fixing the order of procession, with all the accompanying ceremonies necessary to be observed in walking from one room to another, Gertrude was recovering her presence of mind, when, as Miss Pratt passed, leaning on the arm of her ally, Sir Peter, she whispered, "Ay! these are pearls of great price, indeed! So, so; somebody has come good speed. Love, like light, will not hide, ah, ha!"

and with an intolerable tap of her fan, and a significant chuckle, on she pattered, while again Gertrude's cheeks were dyed with blushes. At that moment Colonel Delmour, who had heard Miss Pratt's remarks, accidentally trod upon her gown in such a manner as almost to tear away the skirt from the body.

"Was there ever the like of this?" cried she, reddening with anger. "My good Plowman's gauze! Colonel Delmour, do you see what you've done?" But Colonel Delmour, without deigning to take the least notice of the injury he had inflicted, passed on to offer his arm to one of the Miss Mildmays.

Miss Pratt's only solace, therefore, was the sympathy of Sir Peter, to whom she detailed all the mischief Colonel Delmour had done her, first and last, concluding with a remark which, though in an affected whisper, was intended to reach his ear—that, indeed it was no wonder he came such bad speed at the courting—she had need to be both a bold woman and a rich one, who would choose such a rough wooer. This disaster, however, had the effect of a quietus upon Miss Pratt for some time, and Lord Rossville got leave to expand to his utmost dimensions, unchecked by any interruptions from her.

None of the company now assembled seemed to have any particular part to play in the great drama of life; they were all commonplace, well-bred, eating and drinking elderly lords and ladies, or well dressed, talking, smiling, flirting masters and misses. Gertrude was as usual appropriated by Mr. Delmour, who paid

her much attention, and some very pretty compliments in a gentlemanly but somewhat business-like manner. Colonel Delmour sat, on the other hand, silent, thoughtful, and displeased, neglecting even the common attentions which politeness required.

Mr. Lyndsay was on the opposite side of the table, and upon his asking Miss St. Clair to drink wine with him, Colonel Delmour turned his eye quickly upon her, and again a deep blush mantled her cheeks,—something, perhaps, of wounded pride at the suspicion implied in his glance, or it may be of that shame natural to the ingenuous mind at the sense of mystery and concealment. Whatever its cause, its effect was sufficiently visible on Colonel Delmour; he turned pale with suppressed anger, bit his lip, nor addressed a single word to her during the whole of dinner.

There is only this difference betwixt a summer and a winter party, that in winter the company form into one large cluster round the fire, and in summer they fall into little detached groups, and are scattered all over the apartment. Upon entering the drawing-room, Gertrude had unconsciously seated herself apart from everybody at an open window, where she thought she was contemplating the beams of the setting sun as they glowed upon the hills and glittered through the rich green foliage of some intervening elms. But, in fact, she was ruminating on the various occurrences of the day, and the awkward predicament in which she found herself placed with Mr. Lyndsay.

She was roused from her reverie by some one

putting their hands before her eyes, and presently the dreaded accents of Pratt smote her ear, as she struck up, "As pensive I thought of my love, eh?" Then, drawing in a chair, she seated herself close by Miss St. Clair, and taking her hand with an air of friendly sympathy and perfect security, she began—

"I'm sure it must be a relief to you to have got away from the dinner-table to-day. I really felt for you, for I know by experience what my gentleman is when he is in his tantrums; did you see how he was like to tear me in pieces to-day for nothing but because I happened to see how the land lay between a certain person and you? Just look at my good Plowman's gauze," turning round. "I assure you, my dear, I was very much afraid at one time that you would have been taken in by him; for I saw that he made a dead set at you from the first, and he can be very agreeable when he chooses; but take my word for it he's a very impertinent, ill-bred, ill-tempered man for all that."

Colouring with confusion and indignation, Gertrude had sat silently enduring the obloquy lavished on her lover, from utter inability to interrupt her; but at this climax she made a movement to extricate herself, which, however, was in vain.

Miss Pratt again seized the hand which had been withdrawn, and with a significant squeeze, resumed—"You needn't be afraid of me, my dear, your secret's safe with me; and, to tell you the truth, I've suspected the thing for some time. I only wish you had looked about you a little; there's Anthony Whyte has never

so much as seen you yet; if he would but make up his mind to marry, what a husband he would make! very different from our friend the Colonel, to be sure; many's the sore heart his wife will have, and many a sore heart he has given already with his flirtations, for he's never happy but when he's making love to somebody or other, married or single, it's all the same to him."

"Miss Pratt," cried Gertrude, in great emotion, as she again tried to disengage herself from her, "I cannot listen to——"

"Well, my dear, it's very good of you to stand up for him," with a pat on the shoulder; "for it's seldom ladies take such a lift of their cast lovers; but it's as well you should know all you've escaped;" then lowering her voice to a mysterious whisper, "Just to give you one single trait of him, which I know to be a fact—what do you think of his owing Edward Lyndsay seven thousand pound for his game debts? That I can pledge myself for. I was staying in the house with them both at the time. I was upon a visit to Lady Augusta in London, and I had good access to see what went on; and I saw rather more too than what they thought of. Edward Lyndsay was just of age then; and he was invited there to be presented and introduced by the Delmours, for, you know, they're at the very top of the tree in London. I suspect theré was a scheme for getting Edward to one of the misses—but it wouldn't do. Well, the Colonel was to take charge of him, and bring him into fashion by way of—for he's a great deal older

you know, and was very soon old in the ways of the world; he's no such chicken, for, as young as he looks, he must now be a man between thirty and forty." Miss Pratt knew to an hour his age, and that he was just thirty. "Well, the Colonel was by way of introducing him into the fashionable circles, and a fine set or else not he initiated him into; he even took him to the gaming-table, where he lost some money; but what do ye think of his having to pay seven thousand pound and upwards for the Colonel?—seven thousand pound gambled away in one night, and not a shilling to pay it! The consequence was, he must have sold out and been ruined for ever, if Edward Lyndsay had not advanced the money; and, to this day, I'll be bound for it, he has never touched one halfpenny of principal or interest. Where was it to come from? He lives far beyond his income—anybody may see that,—with his curricle and his fine horses, and his groom and his valet; while there's the person that he owes all that money to keeps no carriage, and rides all over the country without so much as a servant after him; and my gentleman can't go to a neighbour's house without having a retinue like a prince after him. But the provoking thing is, there's Lord Rossville and many other people crying out upon Edward for his extravagance and folly in having muddled away his money, and not living as he should do, and making no figure in the world, when I know that he's just pinching and saving to make up the money and clear his estate from the debt he con-

tracted upon it for his pretty cousin there! I once gave Lord Rossville a hint of how matters stood, but he's so infatuated with these Delmours, I thought he would have worried me. There's nothing they can do that's wrong; not that he's very fond of the Colonel, or likes his company, but he's proud of him because he's the fashion, and has made a figure; and so he goes on telling everybody what great characters the Delmours are. I assure you it's all I can do to keep my tongue within my teeth sometimes; but Colonel Delmour's a man I wouldn't like to provoke. What do you think of his having the impertinence to tell me?—that, if he found me meddling in his affairs, he would pull Anthony Whyte's nose for him! I should like to see him offer to lay a finger on Anthony Whyte! But that's just a specimen of him. Oh, he's an insolent, extravagant, selfish puppy! But are you well enough, my dear?"

Gertrude had made many ineffectual attempts to stop the torrent of Miss Pratt's invective; but that lady was no more to be stopped in her career than a ship in full speed, or a racer on the course. At length, uttering an exclamation, she abruptly extricated herself from her grasp, and quitted the room.

There was commonly a mixture of truth and falsehood in all Miss Pratt's narrations; but it must be owned the present formed an exception, perhaps a solitary one, to her ordinary practice. She had for once told a round unvarnished tale, with merely a little exaggeration as to the sum; and for once she had

spoken from actual knowledge, not from mere conjecture. Miss Pratt had, by some means or other best known to herself, contrived to lay her hands upon a letter of Colonel Delmour's, which had led her into the secret of the money transaction—a transaction which, from honour and delicacy on the one side, pride and shame on the other, would otherwise have been for ever confined to the parties themselves.

In vain did Gertrude strive to still the tumult of her mind in the silence of her own chamber; in vain did she repeat a thousand times to herself—"Why should I for an instant give ear to the paltry gossip of a person I despise? How is it that I can be guilty of injuring the man I love by yielding the shadow of belief to the calumnies of a Miss Pratt? No, no, I do not—I will not believe them. Shame to me for even listening to them! False—fickle—mercenary—a gamester. Impossible!"

Alas! Gertrude believed it was impossible because she loved; because all the affections of a warm, generous, confiding heart were lavished on this idol of her imagination, which she had decked in all the attributes of perfection. And yet, such is the delusion of passion, that, could she even have beheld him bereft of all those virtues and graces with which her young romantic heart had so liberally invested him, even then she would not have ceased to love. Ah! what will not the heart endure ere it will voluntarily surrender the hoarded treasure of its love to the cold dictates of reason or the stern voice of duty!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

> "Oh! how hast thou with jealousy infected
> The sweetness of affiance!"
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

IT was so long ere Gertrude could compose herself sufficiently to return to the drawing-room that when she did she found the gentlemen had already joined the party. In some confusion she took the first seat that offered, which happened to be part of a sofa on which one of the Miss Millbanks was lounging, and on the back of which Mr. Lyndsay was leaning. But it was not till she had seated herself that she was aware of his vicinity. To add to her embarrassment, Miss Pratt crossed from the opposite side of the room, and took her seat alongside of her.

"I was just going to look for you, my dear," said she, in one of her loud, all-pervading whispers; "I was afraid you wasn't very well; but upon saying that to Mrs. St. Clair she said she daresay'd you were just taking an evening ramble, for that you're a great moonlight stroller, like some other people," with a significant smile at Mr. Lyndsay, and again Gertrude felt the colour mount to her cheeks. She raised her eyes, but met his fixed on her with such an expression

of deep and thoughtful inquiry as redoubled her confusion; and, scarcely knowing what she said, she uttered an exclamation at the heat of the room.

"Are you too hot, my dear?" cried her tormentor, taking a fan out of her pocket, and rising as she spoke; "then here's work for you, Mr. Edward; sit you down there and fan Miss St. Clair; not that I want to make a coolness between ye," added she, in a half whisper, loud enough to reach Colonel Delmour, who stood by the fire sipping his coffee; "but I really don't think the room's hot; it must just be coming in from the cold air that makes you feel the room warm. You would do well, Mr. Edward, to give this fair lady a lecture on her moonlight rambles. I——"

"It is insupportable!" cried Gertrude, starting up, unable longer to endure Miss Pratt's *mal àpropos* observations.

"It is very hot," said Lyndsay, scarcely less embarrassed than herself. "Shall we seek a little fresh air at the window?" And offering his arm, he led her towards one, and threw it open. Gertrude's agitation rather increased than diminished.

"Oh, what must you think of me!" at length she exclaimed, in a low voice of repressed anguish.

"Were I to tell you," replied Mr. Lyndsay in some emotion, "I fear you would think me very presumptuous."

"Impossible!" said Gertrude, with increasing agitation as she advanced on this perilous subject—"I feel

that I must ever——" She stopped; her mother's caution, her own promises recurred to her, and she felt that her impetuosity was hurrying her beyond the bounds prescribed. Both remained silent, but Lyndsay still held her hand, and looked upon her with an expression of no common interest. He was, however, recalled to other considerations by the approach of Mr. Delmour, when, relinquishing her hand, he made some remark on the heat of the room having been too much for Miss St. Clair.

"It is only in the sphere of my fair cousin herself," said Mr. Delmour, with a bow and a smile; "the fire of her eyes seldom fails to kindle a flame wherever their influence is felt."

Gertrude scarcely heard this flat, hackneyed compliment; but she felt the taunt implied, when Colonel Delmour, who was always hovering near her, said with asperity—

"Such fires, however, are sometimes mere *ignes fatui*, which shine only to deceive."

"A cruel aspersion upon glowworms and ladies' eyes," said Mr. Lyndsay—"since both may, and certainly do, shine without any such wicked intention."

"Were it not that the thing *must* be," said Mr. Delmour, with a bow to Miss St. Clair—"I should imagine it would be difficult to overheat this room; it is large, not less I take it than forty by thirty, lofty, prodigious walls, and a north-west exposure; if it were well lighted, indeed, that might have some effect, but at present it is rather deficient; there

ought to be at least a dozen lamps, instead of those pale ineffectual wax candles; but, in fact, it is not every one who knows how to light a room. In a well-lit room there ought not to be a vestige of shade; while here, in many places, for instance where we are standing, it is absolute darkness visible."

"Yes, it is a sort of a Pandemonium light," said Colonel Delmour scornfully.

"The mind is its own place, you know, Delmour," said Mr. Lyndsay; "and in itself——" he stopped and smiled.

"Go on," cried Colonel Delmour in a voice of suppressed anger; "pray, don't be afraid to finish your quotation."

Mr. Lyndsay repeated,—"can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

Colonel Delmour seemed on the point of giving way to his passion; but he checked himself, and affected to laugh, while he said—"A flattering compliment implied, no doubt; but if I am the Lucifer you insinuate, I can boast of possessing his best attributes also, for I too bear a mind not to be changed by place or time, and in *my* creed, constancy still ranks as a virtue." He looked at Gertrude as he pronounced these words in an emphatic manner.

"What are you all doing in this dark corner?" asked Lady Betty, as she advanced with Flora under her arm.

"We came here to be cool," answered Mr. Lyndsay, "and we are all getting very warm."

"That is most extraordinary," said her Ladyship; "but did any of you lift the third volume of 'The Midnight Wedding'?"

"We'll thank you to pull down that window," cried Miss Pratt. "I wonder what you're all made of, for we are perfectly starving here—sit a little more this way, Sir Peter—your moonlight days and mine are both over. Indeed, as Anthony Whyte says, I never see anything but a swelled face and a flannel lappet in the moon." Then going to Mr. Lyndsay, she touched his elbow, and beckoned him a little apart.

"So, I wish you joy, the cat's out of the bag; but take care what you're about, for a certain person," pointing to Colonel Delmour, "will be ready to bite your nose off. 'Pon my word, you quiet people always play your cards best after all." And with a friendly pat on the back Miss Pratt whisked away, and the next minute was bustling about a whist party with Lord Rossville and Sir Peter.

The arrangement of their table was always a work of delicacy and difficulty; the Earl was fond of whist, and so was Miss Pratt, and for upwards of thirty years they had been in the occasional habit of playing together in the most discordant manner imaginable. Miss Pratt played like lightning; the Earl pondered every card as though life depended on the cast. Every card, every spot of a card, out or in, was registered in Pratt's memory, ready at a call. The Earl was a little confused, and sometimes com-

mitted blunders, which were invariably pointed out and animadverted upon by Miss Pratt, whether as his antagonist or his partner. Then she had the impertinence to shake her head, and hem, sigh, and even groan at times; and to sum up the whole, when they played together, she had the assurance to insist upon taking the tricks, which was an usurpation of power beyond all endurance.

While the seniors of the company were arranging themselves at their several card parties, the younger part repaired to the music-room, where Gertrude was urged to sing by all present, except Colonel Delmour, who preserved a moody silence. Teased into compliance she at length seated herself at the harp, and began to prelude.

"You accompany Miss St. Clair, Frederick?" said Mr. Delmour to his brother in a tone of inquiry.

"Miss St. Clair has found out that I am a bad accompaniment," answered he in a manner which only Gertrude could understand. "To one who sings so true, so perfectly free from all *falsetto*, it must be a severe penance to find herself clogged with me, who am a perfect novice in that art, as in every other."

"I prefer singing alone," said Gertrude, vainly trying to conceal her agitation at this insulting speech.

"It is extremely mortifying," said Mr. Lyndsay, instantly attracting the attention to himself, "that I am seldom or never asked to sing; it is difficult to account for this insensibility on the part of my friends

in particular, of the world in general; but I am resolved to remain no longer silent under such contumely. Miss St. Clair will take me under her patronage; my wrongs shall be heard in full bravura this very night; where shall I find words vast enough to express my feelings?" And he turned over the music, while he hummed Guarini's "Bring me a hundred reeds of decent growth to form a pipe," etc. —then selecting the beautiful arietta:—

> "Io t'amerò, fin che saprà di Flora,
> Coi baci i fiori accarezzar el monte
> E sul mattin la rugia rosa Aurora,
> Vedi molte stille, fecondar le piante,
> Io t'amerò, io t'amerò, io t'amerò!"

he placed it before Miss St. Clair, saying, "Will the mistress allow her *protégé* to choose for herself and him?"

Gertrude, though in some degree restored to self-possession, could only bow her acquiescence; but the state of her feelings was such as prevented her doing justice either to herself or her accompaniment. She was scarcely sensible of the beauty of his style of singing. Neither was it then she was struck with the singularity of having lived so long under the same roof without being aware that he possessed a skill and taste in music which, with most people, would have formed a prominent feature in their character, and which they would long ere then have found an opportunity of displaying. But Lyndsay did nothing for display, and now his talents were

merely brought out when they could be of service to another. Gertrude, however, saw nothing of all this; she saw nothing but that Colonel Delmour had disappeared upon Mr. Lyndsay taking his station by her. The song ended, she hastily relinquished her seat to another lady, and it was occupied in rotation till carriages were announced, and the party broke up. Gertrude availed herself of the bustle of departures to make her escape to her own chamber; but as she passed through the suite of apartments, she found Colonel Delmour in one of the most remote, pacing up and down with every mark of disquiet. She would have retreated, but quickly advancing, he seized her hand; then, in the same cold ironical manner he had hitherto practised, he requested that Miss St. Clair would honour him so far as to endure his presence for a few moments.

"I know nothing Colonel Delmour can have to say to me," answered Gertrude, roused to something like indignation; "unless, indeed, to apologise for his behaviour."

"Apologise!" repeated he with vehemence. "No, that certainly is not my purpose, unless Miss St. Clair will first deign to account for hers; but the thing is impossible; however I might distrust others, I cannot disbelieve the evidence of my own senses——"

"I am ignorant of your meaning; I cannot listen to such frantic expressions——" and she sought to withdraw her hand from him.

"Frantic! Yes, I am frantic to seek that ex-

planation from you which I have a right to demand, and *will* demand from another quarter."

"For mercy's sake! tell me what is the meaning of this?" cried Gertrude, in great emotion. "Why am I subjected to hear such violent—such insulting language, and from you?" And the tears burst from her eyes.

Colonel Delmour gazed upon her for a few minutes in silence, then in a somewhat calmer tone, and heaving a deep sigh, he proceeded—

"But a few hours ago, and tears from your eyes would have been as blood from my own heart; and even yet, deceived and injured as I am——" he stopped in much agitation; then again giving way to his passion—"But you ask me why your are subjected to such language?—your own heart might have spared you that question."

"I have not deserved this, I will not endure it;" and Miss St. Clair again sought to leave the room.

"Then why have *I* deserved—why must *I* endure to be mocked and deluded with hopes you never meant to realise? Yes, that cold-blooded, systematic, puritan Lyndsay dares to love you, and you—— but *he* shall answer for this to me."

For a moment Gertrude regarded him with a look of the most unfeigned astonishment, which only gave way to the deep blush that dyed her cheeks; but it was not the blush of shame or confusion, but the glow of indignation, and, with an air of offended dignity, she said—

"Since you believe me capable, after what passed to-day, of loving another, you might well treat me as you have done; but what am I to think of one who could, for a single instant, suspect me of such base—such monstrous duplicity?"

"Gertrude," cried Colonel Delmour, in great agitation, "Gertrude, I am a wretch if you—— but why those blushes—that confusion at sight of him? Why that air of intelligence that attends your intercourse, and——Did I not hear you myself, when you withdrew with him to the window, ask, with all the solicitude of the most heartfelt interest, what he must think of you?——he! What would his thoughts signify to you if your affections were mine?"

Gertrude felt almost despair as she thought of the impossibility of clearing herself from suspicions, which she was aware there was but too much reason to attach to her, and she remained silent, while Colonel Delmour's eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of the most intense anxiety. At length, with a deep sigh, she said—

"That there exists a mutual cause of embarrassment betwixt Mr. Lyndsay and me, I do not deny; but it is one which involves the interest of a third person, and I dare not divulge it even to you; *that*, and that only, is the cause of the confusion you witnessed, and of the words you overheard. More I cannot—dare not say; I am pledged to silence."

"By him?" demanded Colonel Delmour impetuously.

"No—by another; but that other I may not name."

Colonel Delmour still looked doubtingly.

"And how long is this mysterious connection to continue?"

"Heaven only knows! But do not—do not ask me further."

And as she bent her head dejectedly forward, the string of pearls which hung from her neck attracted her lover's eye, and again his wavering suspicions were roused as he remembered the conversation repeated by Miss Pratt.

"And these precious baubles!" cried he, pointing contemptuously to them—"Do they form part of the mysterious chain which links your fate so indissolubly with that of Mr. Lyndsay?"

"I see I am doubted—disbelieved; it is degrading to be thus interrogated!" and with an air of displeasure, foreign to her natural character, she rose to quit the room.

"Gertrude," cried Colonel Delmour, detaining her, "you know not—you cannot conceive, how my heart is racked and tortured. I will—I must have my doubts ended one way or other ere we part—perhaps for ever. Tell me then—are not these the gift of that —— of Edward Lyndsay?"

"The gift of Edward Lyndsay!" repeated Gertrude, in the utmost amazement. "What an idea!" and she almost smiled in scorn. "The pearls are a present I received not many hours since from Lord

Rossville. I thought little of them then," added she, with a simple tenderness, which carried conviction even to Colonel Delmour, "for I had just parted from you."

"Gertrude, dearest Gertrude, can you forgive me?" and he poured forth the most vehement reproaches on himself, mingled with such expressions of love towards her as failed not to obtain pardon. He related to her what had passed with Miss Pratt relative to the pearls, and in so doing served a double purpose, by clearing himself from the charges that had been brought against him by that lady. This trait of her served to show Gertrude how little dependence ought to be placed on her report, and she felt as though she too had been guilty of injustice towards her lover in even listening to her malicious insinuations.

Though somewhat pained, yet, on the whole, she was not displeased at what had passed. Like many others she cherished that fatal mistake that jealousy is the offspring of love rather than the infirmity of temper, and, as such, its excesses were easily forgiven. In short, this was a lovers' quarrel; a *first* quarrel too; and, consequently, it served rather to heighten than diminish the mutual attachment.

Delmour was to set off early the following morning; and Gertrude, too much agitated to return to the company, took farewell of him, and hastened to her own apartment to hide her parting tears.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Quoique ces personnes n'aient point d'interêt à ce qu'ils disent, il ne faut pas conclure de la absolument qu'ils ne mentent point."—PASCAL.

MR. LYNDSAY was neither a weak nor a vain man, and he was too well acquainted with the nature of Miss Pratt to attach much credit to anything she said. He was aware that, without absolutely speaking falsehood, she very rarely spoke truth; that, like many other people, she failed in repeating precisely what she heard, not so much from design as from confusion of brain, redundancy of fancy, imperfect organic construction, or, in short, some one or all of the causes which seem to render simple repetition infinitely more difficult than the most compound multiplication or addition. Much might be said upon this subject, but few readers are fond of digressions, especially when of a moral or didactic nature; the cause of Miss Pratt's observations must therefore be left to the construction of the world, which is seldom disposed to be over-charitable in its conclusions.

Mr. Lyndsay, indeed, was little in the habit of attending to her words, being possessed of that envi-

able power of mental transmigration, which placed him, when even within her grasp, quite beyond the influence of her power. He had, however, been struck with the mystical fragments of speech she had bestowed on him the preceding evening; he was aware how little dependence was to be placed upon them, but like the spider, her webs, even though wove out of her own intellectual resources, must still have something to cling to, and he resolved to lose no time in demolishing those cobwebs of her imagination. He therefore accosted her the following morning as, according to custom, she stood airing herself at the hall-door, and, without allowing her time to spread her wings and fly off in any of her discursive flights, he gravely begged to know the meaning of the words she had addressed to him the evening before.

"My words!" exclaimed she in some astonishment at being, for the first time in her life, asked for words. "My words! what are you going to make of my words, my dear?"

"Not much; but I confess I am rather curious to know in what way I am thought to have played my cards so well, as——"

"Oh, I know where you are now; but if you want to take me in, Mr. Edward, that won't do; they say 'Daylight peeps through a small hole,' and 'Love, like smoke, will not hide;' so you needn't trouble yourself to go about the bush with me; but you needn't be afraid; mum's the word; mum and budget, ha, ha, ha! —do you remember that? It's mum with you, it

seems, and budget with a certain gay Colonel, for he's off the field. Ay! you've really been very sly; but what will my Lord and his member say to it, think you?"

"It would be affectation in me to pretend that I do not understand your allusions, groundless and absurd as they are," said Lyndsay; "but I do assure you, upon my word of honour——"

"Bow wow, my dear, don't tell me of your words of honour in love affairs; I'll rather trust to my own eyes and ears than to any of your words of honour. I declare you're as bad as Anthony Whyte. I thought he would have raised the country at the report of his marriage with Lady Sophia Bellendean. He certainly did pay her some attentions, but he never went the lengths that people said, though it wasn't for want of good encouragement."

"Well, but as I have never presumed to pay attentions, and cannot boast of having received any encouragement, any report of that kind must have originated in some mistake, and would place both parties in an awkward predicament."

"Fiddle faddle! Really, my dear, when the lady doesn't deny it, I don't think it sets you very well to be so discomposed about it; ay, you may look, but I assure you it's the case, that she as much as confessed it to me last night; now!"

"Confessed what?" asked Mr. Lyndsay in amazement.

"Just that the Colonel had got his offset. Oh!

how I enjoy that!—and that a certain person," with a bow, "was her humble servant."

"Impossible! your ears have deceived you."

"My ears deceive me, indeed! what would they do that for? You surely don't think I'm deaf? and if I am, I'm sure I'm not blind? You lovers seem always to think other people have lost their senses as well as yourselves, but it's only love that's blind, my dear."

"Miss Pratt, I beg you will listen to me seriously, while I assure you, in the most solemn manner, that you are under a complete delusion. For myself, I can only be honoured by such a supposition; but it is injurious, it is insulting to Miss St. Clair to have it imagined that she has already bestowed her regards upon me, who am, in fact, still almost a stranger to her."

Mr. Lyndsay spoke with that air of truth and sincerity that would have carried conviction to any other mind.

"As to that, it doesn't take a lifetime to fall in love, and your sudden love is always the strongest; many a one has been over head and ears before you could say Jack Robinson. I really don't see why you should take it so much to heart when the lady puts up with it so quietly; but more than that, I happened to hear something last night, I may as well tell you what it was, if it was only to save you telling any more fibs to me about it. I happened to be taking a turn through the rooms last night, just to cool myself

a little after losing seven points, all owing to your good uncle's obstinacy—when I came to the what-do-ye-call-it-room there, the door was open, and there I heard the Colonel say, in a voice like any lion," raising hers in imitation, 'You love that—that'—(no matter what)—'that Edward Lyndsay,' says he, 'and you've deceived and bamboozled me. I know that you've given your affections to him; but he shall answer for it;' and so he went on like any madman. I didn't hear so well what she said, for you know she doesn't speak very loud; but I heard her say that she couldn't and wouldn't endure such insolence, and that he had no right to speak to her in that way. But just then Lord Rossville was calling me to go and play the game over again with him; and, at any rate, you know I wouldn't have stayed to listen."

"All that is nothing to the purpose," cried Mr. Lyndsay, in some little emotion; "at least the only purpose is to show how little dependence you ought to place on any of your senses, since they must all have beguiled you in this matter. You will therefore act a prudent part for yourself, and a more delicate one towards Miss St. Clair, if you refrain from making any such comments in future; be assured you will only render yourself highly ridiculous——"

"Oh! you needn't be afraid; I'm not going to trouble my head about the matter," returned Miss Pratt, reddening with anger; "but you'll not easily persuade me that I've lost my senses because I happen to have a little more penetration than my neighbours."

And away pattered the offended fair, rather confirmed than shaken in her preconceived notions on the subject.

Disbelieving, as he certainly did, the greater part of Miss Pratt's communications, still it was not in nature that Mr. Lyndsay should have felt altogether indifferent to them. Although not a person to yield his affections lightly, he certainly had been charmed with Miss St. Clair's beauty and grace, with the mingled vivacity and softness of her manners, and with the open *naïf* cast of her character. There was all to captivate a mind and taste such as his; but there was still something wanting to render the charm complete. Firm in his own religious principles, he vainly sought in Gertrude for any corresponding sentiments. Gertrude was religious—what mind of any excellence is not? but hers was the religion of poetry, of taste, of feeling, of impulse, of any and everything but Christianity. He saw much of fine natural feeling; but in vain sought for any guiding principle of duty. Her mind seemed as a lovely, flowery, pathless waste, whose sweets exhaled in vain; all was graceful luxuriance, but all was transient and perishable in its loveliness. No plant of immortal growth grew there; no "flowers worthy of Paradise."

Mr. Lyndsay had discernment to trace the leading features of his cousin's mind, even through the veil which was cast over it by Lord Rossville's tyranny and Mrs. St. Clair's artifice. He saw her ardent, enthusiastic, and susceptible, but rash, visionary, and unregulated; he feared she was in bad hands, even in

her mother's; but he dreaded still more lest Colonel Delmour should succeed in gaining her affections. He suspected his design; and, from his previous knowledge of his habits and principles, was convinced that such an union would be the wreck of Gertrude's peace and happiness.

Since that strange and mysterious adventure in the wood he had felt a still deeper interest in her, and he wished, if possible, to gain her friendship and confidence, that he might endeavour to save her from the snares with which she was beset. In short, Lyndsay's feelings towards her were compounded into one which could not have been easily defined; it was neither love nor friendship, yet partook of the nature of both—for it had somewhat of the excitement of the one, with the disinterestedness of the other.

The mutual embarrassment of the cousins was not lessened when they next met, and they seemed, by a sort of tacit agreement, to avoid each other, which Miss Pratt set down as a proof positive that there was a perfect understanding between them; but she was highly provoked that, with all her watching and spying, she never could detect stolen glances, or soft whispers, or *tête-à-tête* walks, or private meetings, or any of those various symptoms which so often enable single ladies to anticipate and settle a marriage before it has been even thought of by the parties themselves.

Not daring, however, to give utterance to her thoughts where she was, and unable any longer to keep her discovery pent up within her own bosom, she

availed herself of the opportunity of a *free cast*, as she called it, to make out her visit to Lady Millbank; and there she accordingly betook herself with her budget—containing, in strict confidence, all the particulars of Colonel Delmour's refusal, his impertinent perseverance, his frightening Miss St. Clair into hysterics by his violence, etc. etc. etc. Then came the history of Mr. Lyndsay's acceptance, her own bright discoveries, a full and minute description of the pearls, well garnished with conjectures as to how it would all end when Mr. Member came to poll, and found another elected and returned. Some of these dark sayings she had even dared to throw out to Lord Rossville; but his Lordship's thoughts were so engrossed by the realities of electioneering that he had none to throw away upon it metaphorically.

Miss Pratt's departure was as usual a relief to the whole party; but to none so much as to Miss St. Clair and Mr. Lyndsay, who soon found themselves conversing together, if not with their former ease, with more than their former interest in each other. She could not be insensible to the quiet elegance of his manners, and the superiority of his conversation, but yet she failed to do him justice; for, solely occupied with one engrossing object, she merely sought in any other wherewithal to lighten the tedium of his absence. Two different pictures had been presented to her in the characters of the cousins—the one rich, varied, and brilliant in its colouring; the other correct and beautiful in its outline. The one

attracting instant admiration—the other appreciated only by the careful and discriminating. Had perfection itself now been placed before her, it had failed to captivate the heart, over which a dazzled imagination had cast its deceitful hues. The idol of that heart had gained an absolute ascendency over her affections, and on it she looked, not with the steady eye of sober truth, but with the fascinated gaze of spell-bound illusion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Many, like myself, are sick of this disease: that when they know not how to write, yet cannot refrain from writing."
ERASMUS.

THE following letters were put into Gertrude's hand one morning. The first she opened was sealed with an evergreen leaf; motto, *Je ne change qu'en mourant.*

"I am inexpressibly pained to think what an opinion my dearest cousin must have formed of me, from having allowed so much time to elapse ere I commenced a correspondence from which, believe me, I expect to derive the most unfeigned and heartfelt delight. But you, my dear friend, whose fate it has been to roam, 'and other realms to view,' will, I am sure, make allowance for the apparent neglect and unkindness I have been guilty of, which, be assured, was very far from designed on my part. Indeed, scarce a day has elapsed since we parted that I have not planned taking up my pen to address you, and to attempt to convey to you some idea, however faint, of all I have seen and felt since bidding adieu to Caledonia. But, alas! so many of the vulgar cares of life obtrude themselves even here, in 'wilds un-

known to public view,' as have left me little leisure for the interchange of thought.

"Were it not for these annoyances, and the want of a congenial soul to pour forth my feelings to, I could almost imagine myself in Paradise. *Apropos*, is a certain regiment still at B., and have you got acquainted with any of the officers yet? You will perhaps be tempted to smile at that question; but I assure you there is nothing at all in it. The Major and Bell (or Mrs. Major Waddell, as she wishes to be called in future, as she thinks Bell too familiar an appellation for a married woman) are, I think, an uncommon happy attached pair—the only drawback to their happiness is the Major's having been particularly bilious of late, which he ascribes to the heat of the weather, but expects to derive the greatest benefit from the waters of Harrowgate. For my part, I am sure many a 'longing lingering look' I shall cast behind when we bid adieu to the sylvan shores of Winander. I have attempted some views of it, which may serve to carry to you some idea of its beauties. One on a watch-paper, I think my most successful effort. The Major has rallied me a good deal as to who that is intended for; but positively that is all a joke, I do assure you. But it is time that I should now attempt to give you some account of my travels, though, as I promise myself the delight of showing you my journal when me meet, I shall omit the detail of our journey, and at once waft you to what I call Lake Land. But where shall I find language to express my admiration!

"One thing I must not omit to mention, in order that you may be able to conceive some idea of the delight we experienced, and for which we were indebted to the Major's politeness and gallantry. In order to surprise us, he proposed our taking a little quiet sail, as he termed it, on the lake. All was silence; when, upon a signal made, figure to yourself the astonishment and delight of Mrs. Major and myself, when a grand flourish of French horns burst upon our ears, waking the echoes all round; the delightful harmony was repeated from every recess which echo haunted on the borders of the lake. At first, indeed, the surprise was almost too much for Mrs. Major, and she became a little hysterical, but she was soon recovered by the Major's tenderness and assurances of safety. Indeed he is, without exception, the most exemplary and devoted husband I ever beheld; still I confess (but that is *entre nous*), that to me, the little taste he displays for the tuneful nine would be a great drawback to my matrimonial felicity.

"After having enjoyed this delightful concert, we bade a long adieu to the sylvan shores of Ulls Water, and proceeded to Keswick, or, as it is properly denominated, Derwent Water, which is about three miles long; its pure transparent bosom, studded with numberless wooded islands, and its sides beautifully variegated with elegant mansions, snow-white cottages, taper spires, pleasant fields, adorned by the hand of cultivation, and towering groves that seem as if

impervious to the light of day. The celebrated Fall of Lodore I shall not attempt to depict; but figure, if you can, a stupendous cataract, rushing headlong over enormous rocks and crags, which vainly seem to oppose themselves to its progress.

"With regret we tore ourselves from the cultivated beauties of Derwent, and taking a look, *en passant*, of the more secluded Grassmere and Rydall, we at length found ourselves on the shores of the magnificent Winander.

"Picture to yourself, if it be possible, stupendous mountains rearing their cloud-capped heads in all the sublimity of horror, while an immense sheet of azure reflected the crimson and yellow rays of the setting sun as they floated o'er its motionless green bosom, on which was impressed the bright image of the surrounding woods and meadows, speckled with snowy cottages and elegant villas! I really felt as if inspired, so much was my enthusiasm kindled, and yet I fear my description will fail in conveying to you any idea of this never-to-be-forgotten scene. But I must now bid you adieu, which I do with the greatest reluctance. How thought flows upon me when I take up my pen! how inconceivable to me the distaste which some people express for letter-writing!

"*Scribbling*, as they contemptuously term it. How I pity such vulgar souls! You, my dear cousin, I am sure, are not one of them, I have scarcely left room for Mrs. Major to add a P.S. Adieu! Your affectionate

"LILLY."

Mrs. Waddell's postscript was as follows:

"MA CHERE COUSINE—Of course you cannot expect that I, a married woman, can possibly have much leisure to devote to my female friends, with an adoring husband, who never stirs from my side, and to whom my every thought is due. But this much, in justice to myself, I think it proper to say, that I am the happiest of my sex, and that I find my Waddell everything generous, kind, and brave!

"ISABELLA WADDELL."

The perusal of this letter was a severe tax upon Gertrude's patience, as it has doubtless been upon all who have read it; though tempted to laugh at it, she was, however, too generous to expose it to ridicule, and therefore hastened to commit the fair Lilly's lucubrations to the flames.

Poor Miss Lilly, like many other misses, had long aimed at the character of an elegant letter-writer, and this epistle she looked upon as one of her happiest efforts; she had studied it; she had meditated upon it; she had written a scrawl of it; she had consulted her journal upon it—in short, she had composed it. One may compose a sermon, or an essay, or anything, save a letter; but when a letter is composed, all persons of taste must feel it is an odious composition. To speak with the pen is the art of letter-writing, and even a confused, vulgar, natural letter, flowing direct from the brain, or, it may be, from the heart, of one of uncultivated intellect, is more pleasing

than the most studied and elaborate performance from the same scource. But in letter-writing, as in conversation, many seem to study to make themselves tiresome, who, had they allowed their pens and their tongues to take their natural course, might have remained at least inoffensive. Yet many have lived to write good plain matter-of-fact letters, who have spent the early years of their life composing sentences, and rounding periods, and writing descriptions from the false ideas they entertain on this subject. But enough of condemnation on this, after all, venial transgression.

The other letter was in a different strain, as follows :—

"My dear Cousin—I feel encouraged to the liberty I am going to take by the kindness you showed me when at Bellevue. Your good-will may now be the means of rendering me an essential service, and I would feel myself to blame if false diffidence should hinder me from unbosoming myself to you. I was several times on the point of explaining myself to you, but thought I could more easily do it in writing, and now that I take up my pen, I wish I had rather spoken to you when I had so many favourable opportunities. But why am I so wavering and foolish, when I ought with confidence to look to Him who has promised to direct the Christian's path, and who has promised that He will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Him, and acknowledge Him in all their ways? I must now trust to your patience, while I tell my tale. A mutual attach-

ment has subsisted between William Leslie and myself from our earliest years; but he is poor, and on that account, and that only, it is not sanctioned by my parents—of course, you will believe that I never would enter into so sacred a connection without their consent. I love and reverence them too much, and, above all, I fear God, but fain would I hope that, had he a competency, their prejudices (for prejudices I must call them) would be overcome. William's choice was early pointed to the Church, and his clerical education has for some time been completely finished, but hitherto all his efforts to procure a living have proved ineffectual. My father might assist him, but he is very lukewarm in the cause, as both my mother and he declare they cannot bear the idea of seeing me the wife of a poor minister. But I have learnt that poverty is a comparative thing, and that a competence to some is riches, while to others wealth seems little better than splendid want. It is true riches will be denied me, but the greater blessings of peace and mutual affection may, by the blessing of God, be my happy lot. Even when called upon to endure hardship and privations our souls will not be cast down, for with one heart and one faith we will cheerfully bear the crosses of this life, looking forward to the inseparable and everlasting happiness of that which is to come.

"'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,' than to sit in the joyless ease of indifference amidst heartless grandeur, or to drink the bitter cup of variance.

Ah! my dear cousin, God only can put gladness in the heart, and 'tis not by the world or the things of the world. If, as I believe, religion be indeed the soul of happiness, then may I reasonably hope for that peace which the world cannot give, with one whom I have known and loved from my earliest years, and whose faith and practice are those of a follower of Jesus Christ.

"This attachment is no phantom of a heated imagination. Our mutual love is now a principle—it cannot be extinguished, but it may be sacrificed to a still more sacred claim. I again repeat, I never will marry without the consent and blessing of my parents, but were my dear William provided for, I think their pride would yield to their stronger feeling of affection for me. Yet I almost blush to trouble you with my selfish concerns, though I know you will befriend me if you can. The church of Clearburn is in Lord Rossville's gift; the present incumbent is old and infirm, and an assistant and successor is to be immediately appointed. I do not ask you to recommend William Leslie, because you ought not to recommend one to fill so sacred an office who is utterly unknown to you; but if you would name him to Lord Rossville—if you would request of him to inquire into his character and qualifications of those who can judge of them, and then if you will support him with your influence, you will confer a heartfelt obligation on your faithful and affectionate cousin, ANNE BLACK."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"With a great understanding as a round orb that tumbles hither and thither, able to guess at the depth of the great sea."
Hindoos' Description of their God.

To feel and to act were with Gertrude commonly one and the same thing, reflection seldom was allowed to interpose its cooling influence, and scarcely had she finished reading the letter when she flew to Lord Rossville to ask (and she had no doubt to obtain) the boon solicited. She found the Earl alone in his study, surrounded with papers and parchments, and looking, if possible, even more than usually portentous.

"I am come, my Lord, to ask—to beg a favour,——" she began, almost breathless from haste and emotion.

"Miss St. Clair, this is rather an interruption; but be seated—be seated—and be composed. You, and indeed all who have any claims upon my time, influence, or assistance, will ever find my ear open to the voice of proper solicitation; therefore, I again repeat, be composed, and allow this flow of spirits to subside ere you commence."

There is nothing less likely to promote its end than a recommendation to be cool and composed

when one is all ardour and eagerness; but this was one of Lord Rossville's methods of tormenting his victims. He was always composed himself, even when in anger—that is, he was always heavy, dull, and formal; and no subject could warm him so as to make him neglect the slow, pompous formation of his sentences. His body was heavy; his nerves were tough; his blood was thick; he was a dull man; but, like many other men, he deceived himself, for he thought his dullness was self-command, and that he had the same merit in being composed as one whose perceptions are lively, whose blood flows rapidly, and whose ready imagination comprehends whole sentences such as his Lordship composed, ere they were half pronounced — one, in short, who thought and spoke with natural feeling and animation. Different, indeed, was Lord Rossville's composure from that of one who "hath learned to rule his own spirit," for he had a temper to rule but no spirit. He had a sluggish, obstinate, thick-headed, pragmatical temper, incapable of hurrying him into the ebullitions of passion, 'tis true, but not the less troublesome and tormenting to those who opposed it. But this *desideratum*—for it was mere absence of animal heat that kept his Lordship cool—was more than compensated by what he deemed the masculine tone and nervous energy of his language, heightened as it was by gesticulation suited to the subject.

"Be composed," repeated he again, after a pause, his own composure becoming more and more heavy.

"Oh, it is nothing; I only feel a little afraid lest you should think me too presuming when I ask—but I believe the petition itself will plead its own cause better than I can do; and she put her cousin's letter into his Lordship's hands, with very sanguine anticipations as to the result.

Lord Rossville persued it in silence; but his looks became darker at every line, and his head shook, or rather trembled, from beginning to end.

"A most wild, dangerous, and improper letter," said he, when he finished it, vainly endeavouring to speak quicker. "I am pained to think that such a letter should have been addressed to you—that such a letter should have been presented by you to me." And his Lordship walked up and down the room in composed discomposure, while Gertrude remained aghast and motionless at seeing her church in the air thus vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision. "Is it possible, Miss St. Clair,"—asked he, his hand slowly rising, "is it possible that you had perused this letter?" pointing with his obstinate-looking fingers to the paper in question—"And is it possible that, having read, you can also sanction and approve and assist a young female in setting up her own judgment in opposition to the known will and intention of her parents, and to the opinion and approval of the world in general?"

"Although my cousin is so unfortunate as to differ from her parents on that subject," said Gertrude timidly, "she declares that she will not disobey them."

"Not disobey them? Good heavens! Miss St. Clair, what do you term disobedience?" The dignity of this appeal was interrupted by a cough. "*I* have lived longer in the world, and have seen rather more of mankind than you have done, and I do not hesitate to say that the principles contained in this letter, if acted upon by the bulk of mankind (and it is only by generalising principles that we can fairly bring them to the test), must eventually prove highly destructive to the present order of things, inasmuch as they are totally subversive of all filial obedience and parental authority."

Gertrude was much at a loss to answer this tirade, which confounded, without in the smallest degree convincing her. Again, however, she tried to urge something in extenuation; but it was, as Jeremy Taylor expresses it, treading on the corns of his Lordship's mind to attack any of his opinions or prejudices, and it was resented accordingly.

"I own I am distressed, mortified, shocked, Miss St. Clair, that a letter containing such sentiments should be advocated by you; sentiments fraught with so much mischief—principles destructive of the mutual relationship of parent and child; wild, fantastical, new-fangled notions, setting at defiance all proper doctrines of religion, and only calculated to disturb, and finally abolish, all orders of society; and yet it is such—such—I say I should consider myself as acting a most highly culpable part were I to lend the smallest countenance or sanction to such measures." And he

walked up and down the room, his shoes creaking at every step. "Mr. Black is a sensible, well-principled man, and obviously views the matter in the same light as I do, and as, indeed, all persons of a right way of thinking should do. A young female to presume to judge for herself in opposition to the wishes of her parents, to the opinion of the world, to the general voice of mankind, and to seek to—to assume the mask of religion, in order to—to stifle the voice of duty—it is lamentable, it is deplorable, it is monstrous! What was it but by such steps as these the established order of things in a neighbouring country were gradually undermined, and at length finally overthrown? It was by such steps as these" (knocking the letter slowly with his knuckles) "that the altar and the throne, religion and—and—and loyalty, and—and sound morality, all that were formerly held sacred, fell sacrifices to these very levelling principles;" and he threw the letter from him with all the energy of virtuous indignation.

Gertrude could scarcely refrain from smiling at the idea of Anne Black's marriage endangering Church and State; and something of that sort she ventured to express.

"I beg pardon, my Lord," said she; "but, even supposing my cousin's marriage were to take place, I cannot perceive any bad consequences that would result from it, unless to herself."

"You do not perceive—you do not perceive the pernicious effects of such an example operating on

young females in the same sphere? Operating, too, under my sanction and countenance—and—and—and —and *I* to become the patron of rebellious undutiful children!—the conniver at low and improper and clandestine connections! Were such a precedent once established where is it to end? You yourself, I shall suppose, for the sake of illustrating my argument—you presuming upon my license in this instance, deem yourself authorised to select, choose, and—and —and declare, that you will select and choose, nay, that you *have* selected and chosen, a—a partner for yourself, not only without my concurrence, but in direct opposition and contradiction to my will and authority. I ask, Would not such behaviour on your part be—I do not scruple to say—monstrous?"

Gertrude was not prepared for this digression, but she saw by his Lordship's bend that an answer was expected, and in some trepidation she replied—

"I hope it never will be my misfortune to differ from your Lordship on this subject. But if it should ——" she stopped in much agitation.

"You hope it will never be your misfortune to differ from me," repeated his Lordship, with a very dissatisfied look; "that is a style of language, Miss St. Clair, I own, which does not satisfy me. On that subject I can allow no differences. No young lady, of a right way of thinking, ought or *can* have a different opinion on so important a point from those whom it is her duty to reverence and obey."

His Lordship paused, and seemed to be revolving

some mighty matter in his mind; and Gertrude, trembling to what this might lead, rose, and taking up her cousin's letter, was preparing to leave the room, when her uncle motioned with his hand for her to resume her seat; then in a slow, solemn tone, spoke as follows:—

"It certainly formed no part of my original plan with regard to you, that, at this early stage of your existence, you should have been made acquainted with the plans I had formed and laid down for your final disposal; but, from what has passed, I am inclined to think that, in deviating from my former purpose, I shall do wisely and well." He then proceeded in the same prolix manner to unfold to Gertrude the future web of her life, as spun and wove by his Lordship's own hand—or rather head.

Gertrude heard, without surprise, but not without emotion, that she was the destined wife of Mr. Delmour, and in that light was considered by him, and by all the members of the family, and by all the freeholders in the county, and her heart glowed with resentment at the thoughts of any one having thus dared to appropriate her without her own consent. Scarcely could she listen with patience while Lord Rossville detailed, in the most minute yet guarded manner, his plans with regard to her future establishment, as if afraid of making her too happy, or raising her expectations too high. Thus, after having settled everything regarding her marriage, with more than a lawyer's punctilio, he hastened to undo his own work

in the same breath, by adding that it was not his intention that the marriage should take place until she had attained the age of twenty-one, at soonest; perhaps not even then, as he was no advocate for early alliances; that is, too early. "There was a time for all things, and that time must be regulated by circumstances; but, in the meantime——"

"In the meantime, my Lord," cried Gertrude, with great emotion, "I must be allowed to disclaim any engagement with Mr. Delmour."

The Earl regarded her for some moments with the greatest astonishment, and seemed as if wholly bereft of the power of expressing the indignation which swelled in his bosom, almost to suffocation, at this act of overt rebellion. At length he found words, though ideas were still wanting.

"What am I to understand from this most extraordinary speech, Miss St. Clair?" interrogated he, with some difficulty.

Gertrude, in much emotion, but with the utmost gentleness of manner, repeated her words.

"Allowed to disclaim any engagement with Mr. Delmour! a most extraordinary proposal at such a time!—at a time when so much is at stake; a most improper, nay, a most indelicate proposal in the present posture of affairs."

His Lordship cleared his voice, hemmed, coughed, and proceeded: "You cannot be ignorant, Miss St. Clair, of the very important contest at present carrying on in this county, a contest which is of vital im-

portance to the power and consequence of this family, and, I may add, of some interest to the country at large; as, in these times of anarchy and rebellion, when the Throne and the Government are assailed on all sides by factious and turbulent demagogues, it is of the utmost importance that our representation in Parliament be sound, loyal, and patriotic, if we expect that our religion and laws may be preserved and handed down unimpaired to our posterity."

Her assent seemed to be expected to this opening speech; but Gertrude could make none.

The Earl went on—

"You are probably not aware of the motives which have actuated me in thus developing my schemes and intentions to you, and to the world in general, at this period; and in doing so, I certainly have deviated from my original plan; but we must all occasionally be regulated by circumstances; and I think I have only to state to you that the success of this most important political contest depends very considerably upon the understanding that Mr. Delmour will eventually, and in all probability, one day become, through your instrumentality, the lawful possessor of the family estates in this county, to grant your hearty concurrence in the proposed arrangement; in one word, I could not with propriety offer Mr. Delmour as the representative of this county (he having little more than a nominal interest in it at present), unless —as the—as the, in all likelihood—the intended husband of the presumptive (observe, I say *presumptive*, not apparent) heiress of Rossville"

His Lordship was so much pleased with the eloquence and brilliancy of his harangue, that as he went on he gradually spoke himself into good humour, and by the time it was ended he had almost forgot the origin of his elocution. Gertrude remained silent, struggling with contending feelings. On the one hand was the fear of betraying her secret predilection for Colonel Delmour; on the other, her scorn and detestation of everything resembling duplicity and deceit. At length her natural love of truth and candour prevailed, and mustering courage she said,—

"Much as it pains me to oppose you, my dear uncle, yet I should be still more unworthy your affection were I to leave you in an error. Forgive me"—she paused, her heart throbbed, and her colour rose—"forgive me, I will not deceive you. I cannot sanction the engagement you have formed for me; I never can be the wife of Mr. Delmour."

This was something so far beyond what Lord Rossville could have anticipated that it was some time ere the fact could find admittance to his brain, choked up as it always was with his own notions. While the process of conviction was carrying on he therefore sat as if petrified. At length the light began to penetrate the dim opaque of his understanding; but his Lordship had, as usual, recourse to other people's words till he could muster his own forces.

"Never can be the wife of Mr. Delmour!" repeated he in the tone of one who was not quite sure whether he were asleep or awake. "Not sanction the engage-

ment I have formed for you! What—what in the name of Heaven am I to understand from such language, Miss St. Clair?"

The understanding seemed so perfectly obvious that Gertrude felt much at a loss how to make it clearer. The question was again repeated.

"Excuse me, my Lord, but Mr. Delmour is not the person I—— but, indeed, I do not know how to express myself in a manner less likely to offend. I would say that I wish to be left free; that I might be allowed to choose in so important——"

"You wish to be left free! You wish to be allowed to choose in so important!——hem! Really, Miss St. Clair, I am too much astonished at the—the—the—the—the—the—what shall I call it? the unwarrantable levity of such a proposal, to answer it as it ought. You wish to be left free to choose! and that in a point of such vast, such vital importance! astonishing! Are you aware in what capacity it is that a suitable alliance is formed for you? That it is not as simple Miss St. Clair, and daughter of the Honourable Thomas St. Clair, but as niece to the Earl of Rossville, and presumptive heiress to the title and estates thereof, with the exception of the Barony of Larchdale, which by deed of entail of Alexander, first Earl of Rossville, devolves upon the heirs-male of the family; and therefore it is to consolidate these properties, that they may be again reunited in the persons of your mutual heir or heirs—an arrangement which has Mr. Delmour's entire approbation. I say that under these circum-

stances, there is not, there cannot—there must not, be a choice in the matter; but, indeed, I am very much at a loss to know what to understand by such an expression. *I* certainly have not been accustomed to hear of young ladies of family and fortune and distinction choosing for themselves in their matrimonial course. *I* can only say, for my own part, I—I—had no choice." Gertrude could scarcely restrain a smile at hearing Lord Rossville quote himself as a pattern to be followed instead of a rock to be shunned; but such is the blindness of human nature; we are all but too apt to hold ourselves up as guides when we ought to be satisfied to serve as beacons.

"Allowed to choose!—I—I—and pray, Miss St. Clair, supposing for one moment it was so—where, I ask—where would you—where *could* you find such another gentleman as Mr. Delmour—a gentleman of birth and fashion, of fine address, of appearance, of accomplishments, possessing a first-rate understanding, of which he has already given undoubted proofs to the world by having been appointed one of the Financial Committee, which, for so young a man, I consider as a very distinguished mark of pre-eminence? A man of fine person, of sound principles, of devoted loyalty, of high political consideration; but who, notwithstanding all those advantages, yet submits himself in this case solely to my guidance and management; I ask again, where could you find such another perfect gentleman?"

"I acknowledge Mr. Delmour's good qualities, my Lord, so far as I can pretend to judge of them upon so

slight an acquaintance," answered Gertrude hesitatingly; "but pray forgive me if I still repeat that I must be allowed to consider myself as perfectly disengaged."

"Miss St. Clair," cried the Earl, now absolutely gasping, "I can only say, that—that if you persist —if you presume to report yourself throughout the county as—as—as disengaged—I——" the pulse of life seemed to stand still, and "nature made a pause, an awful pause, prophetic of its end." The clenched hand was slowly uplifted—then descended with a weight that shook the table. "I cannot answer for the consequences!" This is a threat which always forms a happy climax to an argument, from its vagueness, and consequently its sublimity.

At that moment the party in question entered, his hands full of open letters, and with an air of bustle and business, not at all calculated to fascinate a romantic imagination such as Gertrude's. He was beginning some rather formal and complimentary apology for his interruption, when she rose, and in some confusion stammered out a few words in reply, then bowing to the Earl, was retiring, when Mr. Delmour begged to know whether she had any friends in the western extremity of the county, as he was afraid he should be under the necessity of setting off for that quarter immediately, and should be much honoured by being the bearer of Miss St. Clair's commands.

Gertrude disclaimed all interest in that part of the county, and scarcely able to express the common civilities of parting, hastily withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

> "My love's so true,
> That I can neither hide it where it is,
> Nor show it where it is not."
>
> DRYDEN'S *All for Love.*

IN every generous mind there is a spring, which, if touched rightly, yields fine issues, but if struck by an unskilful hand, produces only discord. So it was with Gertrude; affection would have led her, reason might have guided, but mere authority could never control her. To one of an independent spirit nothing, therefore, could be more irksome than the situation in which she was placed. She felt that, to be approved of, she must cease to act, cease to think, cease to feel, cease to love, but as directed by the will of her mother and uncle. A spirit such as hers could not at once be thus subdued; and no one who has anything noble in their nature can be subdued but by their own will, their understanding acknowledging the fitness of their submission. The Christian, indeed, has his spirit subdued to yield obedience, contrary to his own ideas, to those who are placed over him by nature. But Gertrude's principles were not derived from this high and unerring standard; and though

she gave a general assent to the doctrine that children owed obedience to their parents, yet it was with so many limitations that the principle only wanted sufficient temptation to be set aside.

With regard to her uncle, his right to control her seemed very doubtful; and, indeed, the authority of uncles commonly comes in a very questionable shape, and is, perhaps, only to be considered as binding when the uncle has received authority from a living parent, or has early and long supplied the place of a departed one. As for aunts, they are in general accustomed to dictate, but are seldom so unreasonable as to expect to be obeyed. Yet love and tenderness, almost maternal, have sometimes given them a power over a young and affectionate heart, which all the violence of improper authority never could have obtained. These would have subdued a mind such as Gertrude's, but those gentle weapons were unknown and unused either by Lord Rossville or Mrs. St. Clair. Authority with the one, artifice with the other, were the means used to gain their different purposes with one whom opposite methods would have rendered submissive as a child and open as noonday.

Gertrude's first impulse was to hasten to her mother, and relate to her all that passed betwixt Lord Rossville and her. She expected to encounter reproaches; but Mrs. St. Clair seemed almost frantic at her daughter's disclosure, and absolutely shook with terror while she listened to Gertrude's account

of what had passed. But ere she had time to express her sentiments on the subject a message was brought from the Earl, requesting her presence for half an hour in his study. It was easy to guess at the subject in hand, and Mrs. St. Clair, though in great agitation, instantly obeyed the summons. Gertrude waited with impatience for nearly an hour and a half ere the conference was ended and her mother appeared. When she did, she read vexation and discomfiture in her countenance. She was, however, too prudent to express her feelings, but contented herself with saying that she had found Lord Rossville in great displeasure against his niece, and had left him quite immovable as to the proposed alliance and declared engagement; and this was all Gertrude could draw from her mother. She therefore sat down to answer the unfortunate letter that had been the innocent cause of this premature *éclaircissement*, which she did by lamenting her present inability to aid her cousin in any shape, but concluding with the warmest assurances of regard and promises of assistances should it ever be in her power to befriend her. She was then preparing to dress for dinner, when the following note was presented to her :—

"The Earl of Rossville presents compliments to Miss St. Clair, and while matters remain in their present unpleasant position, and until some arrangement of an amicable nature has taken place, it is his wish and expectation that Miss St. Clair should con-

fine herself to her own apartment—*it may be presumed from indisposition.*

"*Rossville Castle*, 29*th Aug.* 18—."

His Lordship, when he perused this masterpiece of a billet, had fondly imagined it would speak daggers to the soul of his niece, and he piqued himself not a little at the *finesse* of punishing her in this exemplary manner, and at the same time keeping her transgression a secret from the rest of the family, whom he wished to remain in ignorance of this defiance of his power. Gertrude, of course, complied with this embargo, and left to her mother to give what name she pleased to her disorder. A week elapsed, and Gertrude still remained in durance, but she bore her imprisonment with great heroism, and its languid hours were enlivened by a packet received through some unknown channel from Colonel Delmour. It affected to be merely a parcel of music; but it contained a letter full of all that love-letters are usually full of—hopes, fears, lamentations, vows, reproaches, raptures, despair. It may be supposed this did not tend to render Gertrude more compliant to her uncle's wishes, and his Lordship was beginning to feel much at a loss how to proceed, when all the combustible particles of his composition were roused into action, and he hastened to array himself in all his honours and take the field in full force. The report of his niece's engagement with Mr. Lyndsay had, by the ingenuity of Miss Pratt, quickly circulated

throughout the county, and had resounded and reverberated from all the corners of it, before the last echo reached the dull ear of Lord Rossville; but when it did, it produced all the effect of a thunderbolt upon his senses. Not that he could all at once give credit to such a monstrous supposition, but it was quite bad enough that the thing should be said, or for one instant believed. As soon as he recovered so far as to be able to ruminate, he therefore resolved upon his plan of proceeding; and, as the first step, summoned his niece to his presence. For some minutes he regarded her with a look which he vainly expected would cause her to sink to the ground; for the Earl thought of expression, as Glendower did of spirits, that he had only to call them, and they would come. After waiting in vain for the effects he had anticipated, his Lordship found he must have recourse to his voice; not that he was averse to using that, but having witnessed the magic influence of a Siddons and a Kean, he had no doubt but that he too could look unutterable things; and he had intended first to kill with the lightning of his eye, and then to revive with the gracious sound of his voice. All this he had intended; but how often are the best intentions frustrated!

Gertrude was quite ignorant of these intentions, and in her uncle's persevering stare saw nothing but a stare, which being always a disagreeable thing, she sought to avoid by casting down her eyes. Still having somewhere read that women can see even with

their eyes shut, Lord Rossville flattered himself that his piercing gaze would penetrate through the eyelids of his niece, and he waited a little longer in hopes of seeing her at his feet.

At length she raised her eyes, but it was to exclaim at seeing a hawk dart past the window in pursuit of a dove. The Earl now spoke.

"Miss St. Clair, look at me."

Gertrude obeyed, and did look, but with an expression which seemed to say, and what then?

"Look at me, Miss St. Clair, if, indeed, it is possible for you to meet my eye, after what has recently come to my knowledge. Miss St. Clair, this is neither a subject nor a time for trifling, and I will have neither equivocation nor prevarication. I ask you again—and I warn you to be cautious how and in what manner you frame your reply—I ask you again, are you willing to be restored to my favour and protection upon the terms I proposed, namely, that you consider yourself as engaged, and as having been for some time past engaged, to Robert Burlington Delmour, Esquire, Member of Parliament, the heir-male of this family; and do you consent that the nuptials be solemnised at such time as I shall deem proper?"

"My Lord, I grieve that I cannot obey you; but I will not deceive you. Mr. Delmour has my good wishes; my affections——" she stopped and coloured deeply; then added, in a low voice, "are not mine to bestow!"

Lord Rossville was struck dumb at this daring

avowal, which seemed to mock the thunderbolt he held in his hand, ready to hurl when the proper moment came.

"Miss St. Clair," gasped he at length, "are you aware of the construction that may be put upon such language?—that it amounts, in the ordinary language of the world, to an avowal or confession of a very particular, I may add, improper nature? Miss St. Clair, what am I to understand from such a declaration?—a declaration which, in the eyes of the world, would be considered as tantamount to an express, and direct, and explicit declaration of a prior and illegal attachment, unsanctioned by me?"

Gertrude bowed her head, either to hide her blushes or to testify her assent. The Earl resumed—

"Miss St. Clair, my delicacy would have spared you this—to you humiliating, to me distressing avowal; but you have thrown aside the disguise which—which—which—but I must now inform you that I am no stranger to this most improper, unaccountable, and unjustifiable transaction; and that, as the preliminary step towards gaining my forgiveness for this, I must say, unpardonable offence, I must insist upon a complete and total renunciation of all farther intercourse with the party implicated."

"My Lord," said Gertrude, trying to repress her tears, "I can only repeat what I have already said—I am sensible of your goodness, I grieve that I should have offended you; but I never will renounce the right of choosing for myself; that choice is made

—would it were one more pleasing to your Lordship."

"Miss St. Clair, I will not hear another syllable," cried the Earl, with an energy unparalleled in the annals of his life and conversation, "I here lay my positive injunctions upon you to refrain from speaking, thinking, or acting any farther in this most faulty and improper transaction, and I shall, at the same time, signify to the other party concerned, that, from this time, he likewise must cease to presume to consider you in any other light than that which the present relationship by blood warrants. I here positively annul and pronounce void whatsoever engagement, contract, deed, or instrument whatever, by which this clandestine, and, consequently, unlawful and improper correspondence has been——"

"No, my Lord," cried Gertrude, in her turn roused by such opprobrious epithets, "you cannot annul the affections of the heart. I am not a slave to be thus bought and sold," exclaimed she, giving way to her long-suppressed tears.

"Miss St. Clair, such language—such sentiments—are no less unbecoming for you to utter than they are improper for me to hear. I will listen to nothing more of the kind, but it is proper you should be made acquainted with what you have to expect from me should you persist in this obstinate, and infatuated, and destructive course in which you have begun. You are then to learn, that, in the event of your persisting in your headstrong and unaccountable refusal

to fulfil the engagement I have contracted for you with the heir-male of this family, it is my firm resolution, and final determination, instantly to withdraw from you my countenance; alienate from you and your heirs every sixpence of property, heritable and personal, which it is in my power to dispose of; and farther, there is good reason to believe that it will bear a question whether I am not at liberty, under the deed of Simon, second Earl of Rossville, to dispone and bequeath the *whole* of the lands and estates according to my will and pleasure. At all events, the right of tying them up for an indefinite term of years is undoubted, and shall most unquestionably be put in force. You have therefore to choose betwixt an annual income of £20,000, to which you are at present presumptive heiress (that is, eventually), or to sink at once into comparative poverty, and insignificance, and obscurity."

"My choice is made, my Lord," said Gertrude, instantly calmed into the most perfect composure.

"Then, Miss St. Clair, you know, and are fully aware of the consequences."

Gertrude only bent her head in silent acquiescence, and, rising to leave the room, the Earl rang the bell with rather more of energy than was his custom, and as she retired, she heard him desire that Mr. Lyndsay might attend him immediately.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"The man scarce lives who is not more credulous than he ought to be, and who does not upon many occasions give credit to tales which not only turn out to be perfectly false, but which a very moderate degree of reflection and attention might have taught him could not well be true."—ADAM SMITH.

THERE is nothing tends so much to brace the nerves and keep up the tone of the spirit as the sense of having been treated with injustice. For some time, therefore, Gertrude felt as though she had gained a triumph by the sacrifice she had made to her lover; she exulted in the thought of thus proving to him the sincerity and the devotedness of her affection, and delighted her fond and simple fancy by imagining how much dearer she would be to him as the (for his sake) poor Gertrude St. Clair than she ever could have been as the heiress of Rossville. But the first glow of enthusiasm over, she sighed as she thought, "Yet how sweet would have been the pleasure of bestowing upon him all that I now see; these noble woods—this far-spreading domain, I had hoped to have made him master of! They tell me he is expensive, that is, he has a magnificent taste, and loves show and splendour, and pictures, and fine horses, and everything that is

beautiful. Ah! how happy I should have been in the means of gratifying him, and of making him so happy—oh! so happy, that he should have had nothing to wish for; yet all these he will sacrifice for me, for he has often declared my affection was all the world to him. What signifies, then, the loss of wealth to those who can be rich in mutual love?" Thus communed Gertrude with herself, and at eighteen who would not have done the same?

Meanwhile the Earl was somewhat at a loss what course to pursue with the other supposed offender, Mr. Lyndsay. His Lordship, unknown to himself, had that sort of intuitive respect for his nephew which weak minds, however against their grain, must always feel towards strong ones, but he still trusted to his powers of expression, and therefore arranged his aspect, as nearly as he could, into that cast with which he imagined Brutus had passed sentence on his sons. But looks were as much thrown away upon Mr. Lyndsay as they had been upon Gertrude; that gentleman testified no sort of emotion whatever at beholding his Lordship's brows bent full upon him, and the Earl again found himself reduced to the vulgar method of explaining himself in words. He then entered upon a speech, which, for intricacy of design and uselessness of purpose, might have vied with the far-famed labyrinth of Crete. Poor Mr. Lyndsay toiled after him in vain, quite unable even to conjecture where his Lordship was driving, and what was to be the issue of his tortuous harangue.

At length the Earl emerged from the dim eclipse, in which, shorn of his beams, he had so long shed disastrous twilight, if not upon nations, at least upon individuals, and the truth burst upon Lyndsay's almost benighted senses. For a moment a strange glow of delight came over his heart at hearing himself called upon to renounce all claim to the hand and affections of Miss St. Clair, but it as quickly faded as he thought of the difference of their views and sentiments, and he smiled in scorn at his own credulity for having for an instant given ear to such a delusion. "It is impossible for me to relinquish what I never possessed," said he in answer to the Earl's appeal; "nor can I even flatter myself it is in my power to obtain. This is some of Miss Pratt's idle rumours, which have found their way to your Lordship's ear; believe me, they are quite unworthy of a moment's consideration."

But it was in vain to hold this language to Lord Rossville; it was seldom an idea found entrance into his head, and when once there it was no easy matter to dislodge it; it became not the mere furniture of the head, to be turned or changed at will, but seemed actually to become a part of the head itself, which it required a sort of mental scalping or trepanning to remove. In vain, therefore, was Mr. Lyndsay's denial; the Earl remained steadfast in his belief, and rejected the idea of Miss Pratt with the greatest contempt. He "was perfectly informed of the whole from authority it was impossible to question." He then went over the same ground he had taken with Gertrude—the

loss of his countenance—the breaking of the entail—the tying up of the property, etc. etc. "Were I, as you imagine, honoured with Miss St. Clair's partiality," said Lyndsay, "I must frankly tell you that all you have now said would not have the slightest influence upon me. I hope it never will have upon the man who is so fortunate as to gain her affections. Much as he may value your Lordship's favour, and the Rossville estates, I trust he will never put either of them in competition with Miss St. Clair."

This was past answering. Lord Rossville took two or three turns through the room before he could trust himself to reply, then spoke—

"Mr. Lyndsay, I can only impute this tergiversation of yours (to call it by no harsher name) to a very mistaken and destructive sense of honour; but what will you say, sir, when I inform you, that not many minutes have elasped since, in this very apartment, and on this very spot, I received, from the lips of the young lady herself, the open and avowed acknowledgment of her—her—her—what shall I call it? her highly improper attachment to, and engagement with yourself?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Lyndsay, his face flushing with a variety of contending emotions; "she did not—she could not say so."

Mr. Lyndsay knew his uncle to be a weak, tiresome, conceited man; but he also knew him to be a man of perfect veracity—one who, at least, always intended to speak the truth. Such an unqualified

assertion, therefore, as that he had just made could not fail to be heard by him with some emotion, however mingled with incredulity.

Lord Rossville, in great displeasure that his word should be doubted, repeated his nephew's last words with more than usual pompous indignation, then added—"I should deem it derogatory to myself to insist further upon this subject. I can only repeat, and that upon the honour of a peer, that I have received from Miss St. Clair the avowal of her clandestine attachment to you, and farther heard her assert and maintain her right to make such a choice."

"Enough, my Lord," cried Mr. Lyndsay; "'tis in vain to attempt to answer such assertions at present—but I shall endeavour to furnish you with some explanation of this mystery ere long." And he hastily withdrew, despairing of any elucidation from Lord Rossville. Yet how or where to find it he knew not, still less could he form any plausible conjecture as to the truth; there was none to whom he could apply, for there was no one on whose judgment or principles he could place any reliance. At one time he thought, was it possible Gertrude could be playing false, and using his name as a cover to some clandestine engagement—the stranger?—Colonel Delmour?—but the next minute he checked the idea as unworthy of her, of himself. Whatever her faults might be, duplicity certainly was not of the number; there was an air and expression of candour and openness in her countenance, manners, words, which placed her above the

meanness of suspicion. At length he resolved to seek her himself, and try whether he could not penetrate this mystery.

Gertrude had remained standing at the window of one of the public rooms she had to pass through in leaving Lord Rossville's apartment; she had been gazing with a vague mingled feeling of pride and regret at the lovely scene that lay before her in all the glowing tints of autumn, when she was roused from her reverie by the entrance of Mr. Lyndsay. He accosted her with an inquiry after her health, and then one of those awkward silences which everybody has felt, ensued. At length, as she turned to quit the room, he spoke.

"Once, my dear cousin," said he, "you conferred upon me the privilege of a friend—that of speaking the truth to you."

"It is one you have hitherto made little use of," replied she; then deeply colouring as the thoughts of the midnight rencontre rushed to mind, she added, "I have, perhaps, no right to expect that Mr. Lyndsay should do what circumstances must have rendered so disagreeable a task for him."

"You wrong yourself and me by such a supposition," said he. "However inexplicable some things may appear, a few words of truth, I am very sure, will set all to rights."

"No!" exclaimed Gertrude, in much agitation; "inexplicable I must still remain to you; ask me nothing; I cannot, indeed, I cannot answer any questions."

"Gertrude," said Mr. Lyndsay, with great emotion, "it is essential to my happiness, perhaps to yours, that we should understand each other." He paused; then, by a strong effort, proceeded, "You will call it folly, presumption, madness, when I tell you that Lord Rossville, under the influence of some unaccountable delusion, has called upon me to resign all pretensions to your favour—to your hand——" He stopped, and Gertrude, overwhelmed with surprise and confusion, remained silent.

"Had I dared to aspire to it," continued he in increasing agitation, "I know no earthly motive that would have induced me to relinquish my claims; but, Gertrude," and he would have taken her hand, but, roused to self-possession, she saw there was only one course she could now pursue; she must throw herself upon the generosity of her cousin—she must confide to him the secret of her attachment to Colonel Delmour; noble and disinterested as he was, she knew him to be incapable of abusing her confidence, and with a mixture of embarrassment and simplicity, she disclosed to him the situation in which she stood.

Mr. Lyndsay heard her with the deepest interest, while she lamented the misunderstanding that had occurred with her uncle, and avowed that her affections were no longer her own to bestow; but when, with faltering tongue and downcast eyes, she named Colonel Delmour as the object of her choice, a shade of anguish overcast his face.

"'Tis then as I feared!" exclaimed he. "Ah! Gertrude, would I could have saved you from this!"

"Saved me!" repeated Gertrude, colouring deeply with shame and displeasure as she turned away.

"Forgive me, my dear cousin," cried he, "I did not mean to offend you—I spoke too abruptly; but I cannot retract what I have uttered. Did not you promise to hear, and to bear the truth from me?"

"I was ignorant then that, under the name of truth, I was to be called upon to give ear to detraction, and detraction against the absent."

Lyndsay looked upon her more in sorrow than in anger, while he answered, "Yet, if you saw one in whom you were interested on the brink of a precipice, would any consideration withhold you from giving them warning of their danger? from saving them, if you possibly could? But do not injure me so far; do not suppose me so base as to have said to you what I have not said—what I will not again repeat to Colonel Delmour himself. I have warned him that I would do all in my power to save you from ever becoming his, if that is detraction——"

"Be it what it may," cried Gertrude, "I will hear no more; already I have heard too much;" and her voice quivered with emotion. "I will go to Lord Rossville; I will clear up this error, be the consequences to myself what they may;" and rejecting Lyndsay's effort to detain her, she flew to Lord Rossville, and, in all the excitement of wounded feeling,

acknowledged Colonel Delmour as the object of her preference.

It was some time ere the Earl could open his eyes to this flood of new light; but when he did, long and tiresome was the scene that ensued. This was worse and worse—to have chosen the wrong brother; 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange; and a parallel was drawn betwixt the two brothers, that, in his Lordship's estimation at least, might have rivalled that of Hamlet. In vain was he denounced; even had she credited the aspersions cast upon him, they would have now come too late; they might grieve, but they could not change her heart. At length, the whole concluded with her being discarded from her uncle's presence and protection. Mrs. St. Clair was next summoned, and a long consultation ensued. Her anger and dismay were at least equal to the Earl's, though caused by different views of the same subject. How to dispose of the offender was the next question. To permit her to bask in the light of his Lordship's countenance, even while under excommunication, would never do; yet to confine her to her apartment, or discard her utterly, would be making the matter public. And as he had no doubt he would ultimately prevail, he was anxious, he said, that the flame of rebellion should not be seen until he had fairly extinguished it. In this emergency the only course Mrs. St. Clair could suggest was, that her daughter and she should pay a visit to her sisters. To this his Lordship at first objected; but, upon hearing that they lived in

the most retired melancholy manner, and that it would be a perfect act of penance for Gertrude to reside there, he consented. Under pretence of change of air therefore, for Miss St. Clair's cold, it was settled that they should immediately depart; and the necessary arrangements having been made, for the sake of appearances, and, as he expressed it, to stifle any unpleasant surmises to which this hasty removal might have given birth, they were escorted to the carriage by the Earl himself; he actually handed in Mrs. St. Clair, but only appeared to assist Gertrude, thus preserving the beautiful unity of his design to the last.

CHAPTER XL.

"Il ne faut pas croire que la vie des Chrétiens soit une vie de tristesse, on ne quitte les plaisirs que pour d'autres plus grands."—PASCAL.

To the worldly mind there is always something depressing in the transition from grandeur to mediocrity. This Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter experienced upon entering the simple dwelling of the Miss Blacks. The one loved the pomps and the luxuries of high life, the other its elegancies and refinements; and both had lost their relish for the humbler sphere which they were now entering. They were received by the sisters with an affection and tenderness which seemed to flow from a better source than mere worldly politeness; there was an openness of character, a calm, sweet gentleness of manner, which could not fail to please; but there was, at the same time, a difference of tastes, principles, and pursuits betwixt them and their visitors which no courtesy of manner or cordiality of reception could entirely do away. The Miss Blacks were no vain professors of that religion which all pretend to honour with their lips, while with many their heart is far from it; their time, their talents, their fortune, their hearts, were devoted

to its service; and in devoting the heart to God how various and comprehensive are the duties which it embraces! Different portions, indeed, had been assigned them, but both were labourers in the same vineyard.

> "Thousands at His bidding speed
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
> They also serve who only stand and wait."
>
> MILTON.

The Word of God was the rule of their faith and practice; they believed, and they obeyed. Yet, impressed as they were themselves with the importance of those divine truths, they were aware that it is not by the *mind* but with the *heart* that man believeth unto salvation; and they sought rather to make Christianity loved and desired than to prove it by reasoning and disputation. As the glories of the firmament are reflected in the placid bosom of some deep unruffled stream of the valley, so did Divine truth shine in them with a clear yet subdued light; while that charity which "vaunteth not itself, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," was visible in the deportment of its votaries, and shed an indescribable charm over the tone of their conversation. Without neglecting their own avocations, or sacrificing their own pursuits, they nevertheless endeavoured, by every means in their power, to render their house agreeable to their visitors, and to promote, if not mirth and revelry, at least cheerfulness and amusement. Still there was something in her sisters with which Mrs. St. Clair could not assimilate; she felt

their faith and their practice a reproach to herself, and she turned with aversion from their excellence, as Lucifer did from the sunbeams, only because of their brightness. Thus it is with true Christian piety, which seldom fails to be an offence to some part of the world, which denounces as zealots and fanatics all who rise above their own low standard. It was otherwise with Gertrude; though not sufficiently enlightened to be above imbibing prejudices, she was yet too liberal-minded and candid to retain them; and she had not lived many days with her aunts ere she arrived at the conviction that *all* religious people are not necessarily fools, hypocrites, or bigots. The unvarying mildness and gentleness of her aunts, their charity to all, their indulgence towards young people, could not fail to gain her affections; and though their sentiments were totally different from hers, and what she deemed very *out-of-the-way*, still the fruits were so fair that she could not but apply to them Pope's often misapplied maxim,

> "They can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

But it was a species of virtue Gertrude felt no inclination to imitate; all her ideas of virtue were those of imagination; she loved to expatiate in thought on deeds of romantic, sentimental excellence; her money and her tears and her emotion were always ready to bestow; but when she herself was brought into contact with real genuine human wretchedness, she shrank with horror and disgust from the encounter. The

dirtiness of the houses, the coarseness of the people, the ugliness of the children, were all revolting to her fine-spun notions of the beauty of benevolence, and she longed to discover some fair specimens of elegant woe, some interesting vestiges of human calamity, on whom to lavish the ardent sensibility of her warm and generous but unrenewed heart; in short, her religion was the religion of impulse and feeling, and, as has been finely said, "Virtue requires habit and resolution of mind as well as delicacy of sentiment, and, unfortunately, the former qualities are sometimes wanting where the latter is in the greatest perfection." Alas! it is not in this world that charity assumes the fair and graceful form with which painting and sculpture in all the richness of their imagination have so often decked it!

Although the Miss Blacks lived, according to the wordlly phrase, out of the world, they nevertheless had a society which even Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter felt it no degradation to mix in. Their doors were open to all, for they practised hospitality towards all, though their chosen friends were those whose faith and practice most closely resembled their own.

William Leslie, the innocent cause of Gertrude's present disgrace, was a frequent visitor, and could not fail to make a favourable impression on her from his interesting appearance, and the modesty and propriety of his manners. From the delicacy of his features he looked even younger than he was, and

may be represented in the words of an ancient and somewhat quaint description, as "seeming much about twenty years of age, brown-haired, tall, of a sweet face, and of a most neat composure." She felt as much interest in the success of that attachment as the engrossing influence of her own would admit of her taking in any subject foreign to it. But to the disquiet of absence was now added a sort of restless anxiety to receive renewed assurances of affection from her lover; not that she *doubted* his fidelity, or for a moment believed it could be shaken by any vicissitude of fortune that might befall her, but still, as she knew Lord Rossville had communicated to him what had passed, it would have been gratifying to have been assured that his faith was unshaken. She saw by the papers that his regiment was still in England; perhaps, then, he meant to come himself and bear her through the storm to which her attachment to him had exposed her; and day after day, hour after hour, Gertrude waited, till waiting degenerated into watching, and watching turned into the sickness of hope deferred. Mrs. St. Clair read what was passing in her daughter's mind, and tried to take advantage of it by prevailing on her to renounce the man who, at such a crisis, could leave her in doubt but for a single moment as to the nature of his sentiments; but 'tis long ere the young and generous heart can believe in anything so monstrous as the deceit of the object beloved, and Gertrude, even while she felt the anxieties of doubt, yet rejected almost

with horror the idea of his unworthiness. In vain did her aunts endeavour to lead her thoughts to better things, or even to direct her mind to other sources of occupation.

Gertrude, under the influence of a wayward and domineering passion, could listen only to its voice; and the voice of the charmer, charm it ever so wisely, fell unheeded on her ear; she felt almost provoked at their calmness and placidity as contrasted with her own uneasy thoughts and unsettled habits, and she secretly sighed at the insipid monotony of her life.

CHAPTER XLI.

> "In hope a king doth go to war,
> In hope a lover lives full long,
> In hope a merchant sails full far,
> In hope just men do suffer wrong;
> In hope the ploughman sows his seed,
> Thus hope helps thousands at their need;
> Then faint not, heart, among the rest,
> Whatever chance, hope thou the best."
>
> RICHARD ALISON.

HITHERTO the weather had been fine, and though fine weather in any town, but more especially in a little dull, dirty, provincial one, never appears to less advantage, still it was a relief to Gertrude to saunter alone in her aunt's little garden, and sometimes to extend her rambles to the neighbouring fields; but two days of incessant rain deprived her even of this resource, and she found herself shut up in the same apartment with her mother and her aunts, unable to take any interest either in their occupations or conversation. Where people's hearts are in unison, a very small space indeed suffices for their bodies; but where there is no blending of tastes and pursuits, social intercourse necessarily becomes irksome and oppressive, and we sigh for even the joyless freedom

of solitude. In the narrow dull streets of Barnford there was little to amuse or attract; but Gertrude sat at the window most part of the morning, gazing she knew not at what. Perhaps there are few stronger proofs of aberration of intellect than that of a person looking out of a window where there is nothing to be seen; and at another time she would have smiled in scorn at the idea of ever being reduced to so pitiful a resource. Certainly the objects upon which she looked with vacant eye were not of the most attractive order. An old gentlewoman sat knitting; her hands at one side of her body, her head at the other, in the manner usually practised by expert knitters. This old gentlewoman, then, sat knitting a large, thick shaped, white lamb's-wool stocking, with wires and quills, like those "upon the fretful porcupine," stuck in her girdle, and which her well-trained fingers ever and anon exchanged and adjusted in a manner which none but a knitter could comprehend or explain. It is a galling thing to those whose hands will not move a finger without the intervention of the head thus to behold other hands performing all the intricacies of heel and toe, apparently by their own free will and accord. There are few servants who do not require to be occasionally looked after; but these trusty and vigilant members never appeared to relax in their labours, though the eyes of their mistress never were once directed towards them, but seemed to be in active observance of all that was to be seen beyond the sphere of her own dwelling. Much might be said

upon this subject; but doubtless my readers love a well-knit story as much as a well-knit stocking; and it would be like letting down a stitch to enter upon a long digression at present.

At the next house a great washing was going on; maid-servants, with pinned-up sleeves, crimson arms, and loose caps, came occasionally to the door to discharge tubs full of soap-suds, while a roaring infant was dandled at the window by a little dirty dog-eared-looking minx, with her hair *en papillote*. On the other side of the knitting lady nothing was visible to the naked eye; but the sound of an old cracked jingling spinnet was heard unceasingly practising Barbadoes' Bells and Nancy Dawson. Below was a shop, and over the half-door leant the shopmaster, with a long, sharp, raw nose, looking as anxiously as ever did Sister Anne to see if there was anybody coming. Now and then the street was enlivened with the clank of a pair of pattens; at another time a spattered cow was driven reluctantly along, lowing most plaintively. There was also an occasional cart shaking the houses in its progress, as it rumbled over the rugged pavement. A hoarse, shrieking ballad-singer made an attempt to collect an audience, by vociferating—

"Bright Chanticleer proclaims the dawn,
  And spangles deck the thorn;
The lowing herds now quit the lawn;
  The lark springs from the corn.
Dogs, huntsmen, round the window throng,
  Fleet Towler leads the cry;

Arise, the burden of my song,
This day a stag must die.
With a hey, ho, chevy!
Hark forward, hark forward, tantivy!
Hark, hark, tantivy!
This day a stag must die. This day," etc.

But his only listeners were a boy going to school and a servant-girl bound on a message which required despatch. These were sounds of hopeless misery; but the blowing of a horn—with what is it not fraught to the watching heart and listening ear? Gertrude strained her eyes, but a long coach, covered with red cloaks and umbrellas, was just setting off—there was not even the hopes and fears of an arrival to agitate.

The day was beginning to close in; dinner had been ordered, and Gertrude, with a deep sigh, was turning from the window, when again the sound of wheels was heard; she turned; a carriage was in sight; it approached in the dubious straggling manner of one uncertain of its destination; the glasses were up and dimmed with rain—but, oh! agitation unspeakable! as it stopped for a moment opposite the window, Gertrude recognised the well-known Delmour crest! For some moments she saw, heard nothing; all was silent tumult in her mind, as she thought, "He is come!—even now he seeks me!" She looked up; the carriage had moved on a few doors, but there it stood; she saw the hind wheels, but she could see no more, save that it seemed to be causing a little bustle; heads were put out from the opposite windows, and two or three people came out of their dwellings,

and crossed the street to it. Every instant seemed an age to Gertrude, and some minutes elapsed, when again it was set in motion. It turned—she saw the horses' heads—they were almost at the door; there was no longer doubt—it was soon reality; the carriage drew up; a loud knock at the door startled even the Miss Blacks; the bustle of an arrival was heard below. What was said Gertrude heard not—a mist was before her eyes, a rushing sound in her ears. The door was thrown open, and in an instant the whole illusion vanished as if by the touch of some fell enchanter, for in pattered—Miss Pratt.

CHAPTER XLII.

"How convenient it proves to be a rational animal, who knows how to find, or invent, a plausible pretext for whatever it has an inclination to do!"—FRANKLIN.

"MY dear Miss Black, this is really too much! Now, don't let me disturb you; but what do you think? I've got into a fine scrape, thanks to my pretty madam of a maid. Miss Mary, I hope you feel youself getting stouter; this is sad weather for rheumatism, Mrs. St. Clair. Miss Gertrude, my dear, are you well enough? But, as I was saying, I really never was in such a situation in my life before. I've been staying for the last week at old General Crabtree's; poor man! the gout really does not improve his temper, and the house is small; and altogether, to tell you the truth, I was glad of an excuse to get away; so when our friend, Mr. Delmour, who's there for a day or two on his political purposes, proposed sending in his carriage to get something done to the lamps, I thought I would just take the opportunity of coming in, having a little business of my own at this time—but what do you think? Upon coming to my own house, lo and behold! it's hard and fast locked up, and that light-headed tawpee is off to a sick mother, or a brother

from the sea, or some such sham, and I'm left to shift for myself—without a hole to put my head in. If she had had but the sense to have left my key I could have made a shift——"

At that instant Miss Black's servant entered with a large key, bearing to be the key of Miss Pratt's house, which, she said, had been sent by Mrs. Dunsmure, the grocer, with whom Babby Braidfoot had deposited it at her departure.

"That's my key, is it?" asked the owner, regarding it with a very bitter look; "and much the better I'll be of that, to be sure," taking it with great reluctance. "I'll find cold quarters there, I think, for anybody just come off a journey."

Miss Black was too sincere to make speeches, or express pleasure she did not feel; but she took advantage of the first pause afforded by Miss Pratt, to express her wish that she would remain with them, and to assure her of a hearty welcome to such accommodation as they had.

"My dear Miss Black, this is really kind! a friend in need is a friend indeed. Well I may say that! But are you sure it's not putting you to any inconvenience? I know I may depend upon your telling me honestly. To be sure, nobody need mind me, for, I thank my stars, I am easily put up; I'm not one of those who can only sleep in their own beds; I can lie in any bed, if it's not too hard, and is well made, and has plenty of pillows, and enough of blankets. Well, since you insist upon it, I'll just take the liberty of

having my bits of things brought out here; they can easily be moved afterwards. Then, my dear"—to the servant-girl—"will you just tell the coachman to take out my luggage? He must get somebody to help him with the largest trunk; and tell him to keep the small one with the right end upmost. And do you hear, my dear, will you take care in carrying up the band-boxes; and there's a large green bag, see that it's well fastened at the mouth; and there's a pair of stout walking shoes in one of the pockets, and my work-bag and a little brown paper parcel in the other; and there's a little basket in the corner, and that's all. Well, this is really comfortable," drawing in her chair, "for a person just come off a journey," taking off her shoes, and holding up her feet to the kindly influence of a blazing fire; "and what's more, it is really kind," seizing Miss Mary's hands, and giving them a most emphatic squeeze, as much as to say—"And there is your reward." The servant now entered to say everything had been taken out, and the coachman begged to know "if there was any word." This, Miss Pratt well knew, was in other words craving a douceur, and she looked a little blank as she answered, "No word; he is just to take the carriage, as his master desired him, to Springwell the coachmaker's, in the High Causeway, and show him what's to be done to the carriage; and he's just to leave it there, and make the best of his way home, with my compliments." Then, as if communing with herself, "If I had been at home, I would have given

him something this wet day—not that he's come so far as to need it, for it's but scrimp six miles; but, to be sure, the day's bad."

Miss Black here resolved these doubts by giving orders for the coachman to have some refreshment.

"Well, that is really very humane of you, my dear Miss Black; but I've my doubts whether it's right to give other people's servants anything. Indeed, it's a principle with me never to give them *money*,"—with a look, as much as to say, "Am I not right?"

"When people give trouble," said Mrs. St. Clair, who was rather in a bad humour, and consequently very sensible in her remarks, "they ought to give something besides."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. St. Clair; I know many people who set their faces against allowing their servants to take money— *many;* they think it makes them greedy and rapacious, and I think so too. Indeed, I'm satisfied it's a wrong thing to give other people's servants money; but I think I ought to give my pretty light-headed Mrs. Babby a month of the tolbooth as a reward for her behaviour."

Dinner, which had been retarded by Miss Pratt's arrival, was now announced. "Bless me! is it that time of day?"—looking at her watch. "I declare it's twenty minutes past five;" then forcing on her shoes —"You must excuse my sitting down in my pelisse, for, I assure you, I little thought of dining in anybody's house but my own to-day." Then, having taken her station at the table—"Barley-broth,"

peeping into the tureen, "and a very good thing it is, when well made, and this is very nice, clear, and strong; it's a great favourite of mine. Miss Mary, let me recommend the broth to you. Miss St. Clair, my dear, you don't look as if you were hungry, that's with not being out to-day. I wish Anthony Whyte could see you just now, for he says an elegant female at dinner ought always to look as if she did not care whether she were eating or not; I really think you would please him there."

"I am sure I seldom care whether I sit down to dinner or not," said Mrs. St. Clair, with a sigh; though, by-the-bye, she generally contrived to pick up the best of what was going.

"My dear Mrs. St. Clair! did you ever try to go without your dinner?"

"I daresay I have, frequently."

"I beg your pardon, but really I think you must be mistaken there; take my word for it, nobody that has tried it once will ever try it again, I speak from experience. I once tried to go without my dinner, but I can tell you it was anything but agreeable; in short, it will not do, let people say as they will. What nice-looking whitings; that's one of Mr. Whyte's favourite dishes, nicely crisped with bread crumbs; and this is a Bellevue chuckie, I'm sure, fat and fair. I declare it's a treat to me to sit down to such a dinner; for I'm perfectly sick of the sight of turtle soup and great fat venison. I was really wearying to get to my own house for a little, if it was only to refresh

myself with a drop plain barley-broth and a bit boiled mutton; and what a pleasant thing for a few friends to meet this way, instead of these great hubbleshews of people one sits down with now, where there's no carrying on anything like rational conversation. Mrs. St. Clair, allow me to help you. Miss Mary, you're doing very little. Miss St. Clair, my dear, take a little wine with me to cheer you this bad day. Is this elder-flower wine, Miss Black? Upon my word, it's very little inferior to Anthony Whyte's Frontiniac. 'Here's a health to them that's awa,'"—with a significant look and an attempt at the tune. "By-the-bye, what did you think when you saw Mr. Delmour's carriage stop? I doubt you were a little disappointed, eh?"

Gertrude felt too miserable even to be moved by Miss Pratt's ill-timed jests, and she remained pale, cold, and silent. To attempt to carry on anything resembling conversation in Miss Pratt's company was impossible; yet to endure her idle tattle for a whole evening was a sacrifice too great even for Miss Black's patience and good breeding. It was in vain to have recourse to music, as she then fastened herself upon some one of the company, and carried on her colloquy in loud whispers, even more annoying to a nice-toned ear than open declamation. The only effectual mode of silencing her, then, was by reading aloud; and although she highly disapproved of that manner of passing the time, and indeed remarked what a wearing-out thing it was for the reader, and how much

easier it was for all parties just to sit and chat, yet her objections were politely waived; and Miss Mary, taking up a volume of Mackenzie, read the exquisitely beautiful story of La Roche, which served as a prelude to the solemn acts of devotion with which the evening closed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"I play the torturer by small and small,
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken."
SHAKESPEARE.

THE sacred emotions which had been raised in Gertrude's soul had, while they lasted, shed their soothing influences on her heart; but when these ceased, she felt gladness only that the day was done, and that she should now be alone. Hurrying to her chamber, she took out the often-perused letter of her lover—the only one she had ever received from him, but that one, did it not stand for a thousand? There was all that the warmest, tenderest passion could dictate—there was every assurance of devoted, unchanging, everlasting attachment; and again and again she repeated that to doubt was base—was dishonourable; but even while she repeated it, a vague secret doubt nevertheless lurked in her mind unknown to herself. She was roused from her contemplation by a knock at her door; and ere she had time to reply to the summons, Miss Pratt's head, in a night-cap, presented itself, with "May I come in?" And taking it for granted (as people generally do on those occasions), she immediately entered. "So, I guessed you would

not be in a hurry to go to your bed—young people all like to sit up late; and, indeed, I'm not over-fond of very early hours myself, so we'll just have a little chat," carefully extinguishing her candle. "This is a nice, snug little room, and I daresay you'll sleep as sound here as in your fine silk bed at Rossville—and, by-the-bye, how long is it since you left the Castle, and how came your uncle to part with you?"

Contrary to Miss Pratt's usual manner she waited for an answer, and Gertrude replied that they had left Rossville almost three weeks since, and there she stopped.

"And your uncle made no objections to your coming here? Of course you could not have come, indeed, if he had opposed it; and I suppose you're to make some stay in that case?"

Gertrude replied that there was no time fixed for their departure, and Miss Pratt for a moment looked as if a little baffled; but, quickly recovering, she seized Gertrude's hand, and trying to look tender—

"My only reason for asking, my dear, is, that I really don't think you agree with this town, you don't look so well as when I saw you at Rossville; I wish all may be quite right," patting the hand which was withdrawn from her with something of a look of displeasure. But the ice was now broke, and she plunged boldly in. "My only reason, indeed, for supposing there was anything wrong is that I've received a most extraordinary letter since I saw you from Lord Rossville, really a most impertinent letter," rummag-

ing her pockets, and dragging out from each receptacle a vast collection of letters, notes, memoranda, etc. etc., amongst which she picked for some time, but to no purpose, for the missive in question; then, with a look of alarm—"Bless my heart! I wish I mayn't have lost it!"—shaking herself most vehemently. "It would really be an awkward thing, for, 'pon my word, it's a letter not fit to be seen by anybody; what he could mean by writing such a letter to me of all people! In short, the substance of it was this, that Lord Rossville had heard with inexpressible astonishment and pain (or some such roundabout phrase), that Miss Pratt had presumed to circulate certain reports of a clandestine, and consequently improper nature, regarding certain juvenile members of his family, which reports—and so he went on, you know his style; but the short and the long of it was this, that I was not to say black or white about any of his juvenile members, and that I was to contradict everything I had said, or might have said, or had heard, or might have inferred, previous to this period—but I can give you no idea of the way it was worded; but what do you think he can mean?"

Gertrude well knew what he meant; but, shocked at her uncle's absurdity, and at the publicity he was thus giving to her attachment, she remained silent.

"Such a fancy to take into his head, that I, of all people in the world, should have set any such reports agoing! So far from that, I'm the very person that has put a stop to them, for I can't tell you all the

nonsensical stories that were going about. One said you was positively engaged to the Colonel; another had it that you were to be married the 27th of next month to the member, and that cards for a grand ball to the county, on the 31st, were making out already in Mrs. Delmour's name; a third had it that the brothers were on the point of fighting a duel for you, when Lord Rossville got word of it, and threatened to disinherit them, and send you to a French nunnery; and in the meantime he has sent you here, as the next thing to it; but, in short, I can't tell you half the nonsense that was going, and everybody came to me for the truth; but they made little of me, for my uniform answer was that, to my *certain knowledge*, neither the one brother nor the other would ever be the husband of Miss St. Clair; that it was quite a different person from either of them that would be her choice—so I leave you to judge if that was spreading reports! But I see how it is; Lord Rossville, honest man, has seen over his nose at last, and he's mad at my having had more penetration than himself; and to be sure it was a most extraordinary piece of blindness in him not to have seen how the land lay long ago. But bless my heart! there's twelve o'clock. I'm afraid you're sitting up too late, my lamb, you're looking very white; go to your bed as fast as you can. Good-night, good-night, my dear!" and, lighting her candle, she was hastening off, when Gertrude, roused into displeasure said—

"Ere you go, suffer me once for all, Miss Pratt, to

assure you that you are in an error in everything relating to me, and that Mr. Lyndsay never——"

"Never can be anything to you," interposed the incorrigible Pratt, with an incredulous smile. "Very well, that's enough. I'm quite convinced from what I saw that Mr. Lyndsay's nothing to you, no, no!"—in the tone and manner used by false nurses to wayward children when assuring them of some monstrous falsehood.

Gertrude turned from her in silent indignation as she repeated her good-nights, and was softly closing the door, when, popping in her head again—

"Oh, by-the-bye, I wish you joy of being quit of a certain disappointed lover; he's fairly off, his brother tells me, at last; a fair wind and a good voyage to him, and I wish him better luck another time. Now go to sleep, my dear."

"Gone!" repeated Gertrude to herself, in an agony, as the door at length closed on her tormenter. "Gone! without one word. For him I am driven from my uncle's house, for him I have renounced all, and he neglects and abandons me!" And she gave way to the long-suppressed anguish of her heart, and for a while experienced all that agony of spirit of which her ardent and enthusiastic nature was susceptible. But hers was not a mind long to suffer despair to have dominion over her; it is not the first stroke of grief, however heavy it may fall, that can at once crush the native buoyancy of youthful spirits; it is the continuance of misery which renders its weight

insupportable, and where there is even the possibility, there is generally the wish to escape from its pressure. So it was with Gertrude; the first burst of grief over, the dreadful surmise which she had at first hugged to her bosom with frantic eagerness, she now cast from her with scorn and indignation. That there was deceit somewhere she could not doubt, but that deceit was not with Colonel Delmour; it was impossible that he should have quitted England without writing to her; but surrounded as she was by his enemies how could she suppose his letters would now be permitted to reach her? Lord Rossville and her mother both so violently opposed to him, both acting in concert, and carrying on a constant correspondence with each other, though the contents of the letters were kept a profound secret from her: all these circumstances she revolved in her mind, till, from the first faint suspicions, they gradually grew into proofs strong as holy writ. Her heart felt lightened by the discovery, and in the morning she took her place at the breakfast-table with her nerves braced and her eyes kept from tears by the determination of rising superior to all the petty artifices that might be practised against her. Breakfast was but just over, when the return of the renegade Babby Braidfoot was formally announced to Miss Pratt, who immediately left the room for the purpose, as she said, of giving her a good hearing.[1]

[1] A good hearing in Scotland signifies the very reverse of what it expresses, and means neither more nor less than a downright scold.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"On met tout en œuvre pour assortir les fortunes, on ne se met point en peine d'assortir les cœurs."—MASSILLON.

"Our morals are corrupted and vitiated by our admiration of wealth."—CICERO.

WHILE this was carrying on Mrs. Black was announced, and presently entered, her blooming good-humoured face expressive of even more than usual satisfaction, which, after the usual greetings had been exchanged, she hastened to communicate. The sum and substance of Mrs. Black's intelligence was this, that her daughter Lilly, having gone with the Major and Mrs. Waddell to Harrowgate, had there made a conquest of a wealthy young London merchant, who had made his proposals, and that the whole party were now on their way down, and were to be at Bellevue the following day to dinner. Due congratulations, of course, ensued, but Gertrude was too much surprised at this sudden revolution in the fair Lilly's affections to be able to express hers in proper form. Mrs. Black, however, was so well satisfied herself that she took it for granted everybody else was the same; and she proceeded to enlarge upon the merits of this most excellent match, as she termed it. Mr. Larkins was

in good business (it was an old established house, Larkins, Barlow, and Company), of a most respectable family, and himself an uncommon clever, genteel, handsome young man; indeed, had it been otherwise, the Major and Bell never would have countenanced anything of the kind; she only wished (with a deep sigh) that some other folks were in the way of making as prudent and feasible a connection. This was evidently in allusion to her daughter Anne; and Miss Black mildly replied that it was indeed agreeable when parents and children were agreed upon so important a point, but that it was not surprising they should often view it in very different lights. "Parents," said she, "complain that children are apt to be led away by romantic notions, which can lead only to disappointment, while children lament that parents look only to wealth and worldly aggrandisement in their estimate of happiness, and I fear there is often but too much justice in the reproaches of both parties."

"I think it is the duty of all parents to prevent their children from marrying, only to become beggars," said Mrs. Black.

"I think so too," answered her sister; "but I fear worldly-minded parents too often confound what they consider poverty with beggary."

"There is not much to draw between them, I think," said Mrs. Black.

"Undoubtedly beggary implies poverty, but what by many is called poverty does not necessarily in-

clude beggary," replied Miss Black. "Wealth itself may, and often has proved insufficient to save the vain, the selfish, and the extravagant from beggary; but Christian principles, virtuous habits, and an independent mind will ever preserve even the poor from becoming burdensome to others."

"It's very easy speaking," said Mrs. Black, with some pique; "but everybody knows that, in these times, it's not little that supports a family; what with taxes and servants' wages, and children's schooling and outfit in the world, it's a very serious matter become."

"All these things are, or ought to be, proportioned to the means afforded," replied Miss Black. "If the poor *will* live like the rich, and educate their children in the same style, beggary, or, at least its sister, dependence, must ensue; but if they would live according to what they *have*, and not according to what they think they *ought* to have, poverty would not be the hideous bugbear it is so often represented."

"In my opinion," said Mrs. St. Clair, who thought she had an interest in the question; "in my opinion, poverty is the most intolerable evil in life, and has, I am convinced, the most demoralising influence upon society."

"Poverty, like beauty, is perhaps not easily defined," said Miss Black; "and I believe the ideas people entertain on the subject are even more various than the discrepancy of taste that prevails as to personal charms; some would call it poverty not to be

able to keep two or three carriages and a score of idle horses and servants."

"You know that's nonsense," said Mrs. Black.

"That's an extreme case," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"Then where is the boundary that separates wealth and poverty?" asked Miss Black. "What is the precise meaning of a poor marriage?"

Both ladies hesitated, but Mrs. Black took the lead. "I certainly would think any daughter of mine had made a poor hand of herself who could not afford to go as well dressed, and give as good and full dinners, as she has been accustomed to in her father's house."

Mrs. St. Clair could not repress a smile in scorn at the vulgar simplicity of her sister-in-law's notions.

"But suppose," said Miss Black, "(as we cannot have everything), that she is willing to wear a less costly gown, and have fewer dishes on her table than you, my dear sister, in your liberality, bestow upon your hospitable board; if, as an equivalent, she is rich in the virtuous principles, intellectual endowments, and rational affection of him she has chosen as the companion of her earthly pilgrimage?"

"All that," said Mrs. St. Clair, "sounds very fine, my dear Elizabeth, and very logical to those who have not seen so much of the world as I have done; but be assured, a young woman of any refinement must be completely wretched under the cares and drudgery and privations attendant upon a poor marriage. For example, there are certain luxuries, as you call them in this country, though in France they are mere

necessaries, matters of course, such as a carriage, wax-lights, French wines, a suitable establishment, handsome mirrors, society that is not company, these things, and many more of the same sort, I certainly consider as absolute parts of that exquisitely combined essence we call happiness, at least to a person of delicate taste and refined habits."

"Such airs!" thought Mrs. Black to herself. "French wines, and wax-candles, every day, indeed! Set her up! I wonder what entitles her to such extravagance!"

"Poverty has really been gently handled by both of you," said Miss Black, laughing; "I don't suppose there ever was so fair a picture drawn of the squalid phantom before. You, my dear sister," to Mrs. Black, "merely represent him as not having his cheeks stuffed out like a plump Dutch Burgomaster; and you, Sarah, quarrel with him for not having all the airs and graces of an epicurean *petit-maître.* Now, although I am too old to fancy that love—wedded love, at least—can live upon smiles and flowers, yet I do believe there is a species of attachment which can exist without being stall-fed on the one hand, or tricked out in foreign luxuries on the other, and which could be happy even in mediocrity."

"I never mentioned such a word as stall-fed," said Mrs. Black, a little ruffled—"but I'm astonished, Elizabeth, that anybody come to your time of life, and who has kept a house so long, can think that people can live upon deaf-nuts now-a-days."

"The rich are, at least, free from the vulgar sordid cares of life," said Mrs. St. Clair bitterly,—"which, I repeat, to a mind of any refinement must be wretchedness."

"I wonder what she calls the vulgar sordid cares of life?" thought Mrs. Black.

"To a mind of any feeling and refinement," said Miss Black, "I believe it would be far greater wretchedness to be linked to a vulgar sordid spirit, even had its master all that rank and riches can bestow, than it would be to endure privations with a mind congenial to its own—to such a mind, there are cares which love only can sweeten."

"There can be little peace where there's not plenty," said Mrs. Black;—"but it's lucky everybody's not of your way of thinking, or the country would soon be swarming with beggars, and we would be perfectly ate up."

Gertrude could not quite repress a smile as she looked at Mrs. Black's jolly person, and thought how groundless such an apprehension was on her part.

"There is little cause for alarm on that account," said her sister-in-law—"as your sentiments are much more popular than mine; besides, I am not so unreasonable as to insist upon everybody's marrying for love, whether they will or not. Many people, I believe, are quite incapable of forming a disinterested attachment, or having even a preference for one person more than another, except, according to worldly motives—a fine house, fine clothes, a carriage, pre-

cedence; in short, some one of the thousand paltry baits which catch the vulgar mind; to talk to such of the superiority of virtue and talent would be as absurd as to insist upon the blind seeing or the deaf hearing; on the other hand, there are those who, with taste, feeling, and refinement, have neither pride, vanity, nor ambition; it is surely, therefore, the height of tyranny to insist upon *their* placing their happiness in the indulgence of those things—upon *their* sacrificing all their purer, better feelings, to gratify the pride and prejudices of others."

"I really wonder to hear a woman of your sense speak such nonsense," said Mrs. Black, affecting to look cool in the face of a very high complexion.

"Such sentiments can only tend to the subversion of all proper principle," said Mrs. St. Clair, with solemnity, "to the encouragement of low and depending alliances, contracted under the high-sounding names of disinterested attachment, congenial souls, intellectual superiority, and such fulsome phrases, as can only lead to the annihilation of all ranks and degrees of society. A weak romantic girl has only to find a congenial soul in her dancing-master, or to prove her disinterested attachment to her father's footman, and, according to your doctrine, she has done nobly—she has proved herself superior to the vulgar allurements of pride, ambition, and what not. Oh! it is an admirable, a beautiful theory!" and Mrs. St. Clair trembled with virtuous indignation.

"Pardon me, Sarah, you cannot disapprove of such

connections more than I do; but a *poor* marriage, and a *low* one, I consider as very different things, although I suspect many people are but too apt to confound them. Undoubtedly a gentlewoman, who has the feelings and ideas of one, will only unite herself with a gentleman,—with one who has had the education, and who has the manners and habits of one, who exercises the profession, and is accustomed to the society of such; for there can be no solid happiness in a union where all the advantages of birth and education are renounced on one side; and I am far, very far, from upholding those who violate the established orders of society, who fly in the face of parental duty, and sacrifice all that is dear and respectable in feeling to the indulgence of their own selfish passion. On the contrary, I will venture to affirm that connections formed without the consent of parents are so far from being productive of domestic happiness that they are generally marked with disappointment, misfortune, and sorrow."

"There's really no knowing what you would be at," said Mrs. Black, with an air of perplexity; for Mrs. Black, like many other people, carried her prejudices all on one side, and nothing puzzled her so much as when she met in argument with a person of an unbiassed judgment and a liberal mind; and so indissolubly united in her imagination were the ideas of a poor being a low marriage on the one hand, and a rich being a genteel one on the other, that to separate them was utterly impracticable. The coarsest

booby, with twenty thousand a year and a title, would have struck Mrs. Black with awe, or at least respect; while the most elegant mind or person, destitute of the trappings of wealth or the insignia of grandeur, would have been wholly overlooked.

The entrance of Miss Pratt soon turned the tide of the conversation, for she had learned from her "pretty Miss Babby," that there was not a morsel of coal or a crumb of meat in the house; and the coals you bought on the street were always bad, and there was no getting meat—everybody knew that—unless on a market day; and, in short, it ended in Miss Pratt consenting to remain Miss Black's guest for another day, until her mansion should be duly prepared and stocked for her reception. In the meantime she set forth, as she pretended, on her business, which, in fact, was that of interfering in that of every other person.

Mrs. Black also departed; but as she was really good-natured in the main, she consented that her daughter Anne should spend the evening with her aunts, even at the risk of meeting William Leslie, who, along with some other of their friends, was expected.

CHAPTER XLV.

"Even as some sick men will take no medicine unless some pleasant thing be put amongst their potions, although perhaps it be somewhat hurtful, yet the physician suffereth them to have it. So, because many will not hearken to serious and grave documents, except they be mingled with some fable or jest, therefore reason willeth us to do the like."

SIR THOMAS MORE.

"Speak nobly of religion, but let it be well timed; for people avoid those who are perpetually preaching."

GANGANELLI'S *Letters.*

MISS PRATT'S visit would have been reckoned rather ill-timed by most people, as the Miss Blacks had invited some of their own friends to spend the evening with them, and the pleasure, if not the harmony, of the party bid fair to be disconcerted by her audacious tattle. But they were too tolerant and enduring to allow any considerations of that kind to stand in the way of their hospitality, though well aware of Miss Pratt's enmity against all whose creed and practice in matters of religion differed from her own; for Miss Pratt, like too many people, deemed her own the only proper standard of religious and moral excellence. She had her bed of iron for the soul, as Procrustes had for the body, with this differ-

ence, that she was far more lenient towards those who fell short of her measure than of such as went beyond it.

Not that Miss Pratt carried her hostility so far as to decline having any intercourse with, or receiving any favours from, these wild people, as she called them. On the contrary, she was always happy at an opportunity of meeting with such of them as she thought she could turn to any account by taking her beggars off her hands, and she was always ready to make use of their time, money, and old clothes to save her own. However, she took every occasion of letting it be known that she had met with a great want of charity amongst those very people who make such a phrase about it, as they had refused to recommend to the Destitute Society Anthony Whyte's nurse, a decent, respectable woman, and Anthony Whyte a subscriber too! But Miss Pratt was not bitter in her resentment; and, upon hearing of the party which was expected, she expressed much satisfaction, and resolved to be uncommonly pleasant, and at the same time serious too in her conversation, out of compliment to the Miss Blacks. Mrs. St. Clair liked company of any kind better than none; and to Gertrude, in the present state of her mind, all company and all scenes were alike. Hers was a state of passive endurance, not of actual enjoyment. She was roused, however, by a visit from Mr. Delmour and Mr. Lyndsay. The latter held out his hand to her, with a look which seemed to say, "Have you

forgiven me?" but colouring deeply, she turned away, and bestowed her whole attention upon his companion. Mr. Delmour was secretly flattered by the air of profound attention with which (for the first time) she listened to every word he uttered, in the hope that something would lead to the subject uppermost in her thoughts but farthest from her tongue; but nothing was said which had the slightest reference to Colonel Delmour, and her countenance betrayed her extreme vexation when the gentlemen rose to take leave. Upon hearing that they were both to be in attendance at a county meeting in town, which, of course, was to conclude with a dinner, Miss Black invited them to return in the evening, which they promised to do, and departed. It was evident from Mr. Delmour's manner he knew nothing of what had passed; but Gertrude had paid no attention to his manner, nor once thought of the very flattering construction he might put upon hers. As for Lyndsay, she scarcely noticed him at all—it only struck her after he was gone that he was more than usually silent, and that his features wore a more pensive cast than common; but what was Mr. Lyndsay to her? and she listened with weariness and chagrin to the eulogium her aunts pronounced upon him.

Evening came; and Miss Pratt, in a grave gown, bottle-green gloves, a severe turban, and a determined look of strong good sense, seemed to say, "I'll show you what a rational, respectable, wise-like character I am; I'll confound you all, or I'm mistaken!" And

she took her ground, as usual, as though she had been mistress of the mansion, and prepared to do all its honours accordingly.

Even in the Christian world there are great varieties, there are narrow minds as well as great minds, there are those who pin their faith upon the sleeve of some favourite preacher, others who seem to think salvation confined within the four walls of the particular church in which they happen to sit. But, as has been well said by the liberal-minded Wesley, "How little does God regard men's opinions! What a multitude of wrong opinions are embraced by all the members of the Church of Rome, yet how highly favoured have many of them been!"[1]

And who has not their imperfections? who has not their besetting sin? their thorn in the flesh? Even the best of Christians; but piety to God, and the desire to benefit their fellow-creatures, is, and must be, the universal characteristic of the Christian of every church. The few friends assembled were certainly favourable specimens of what is termed the religious world; they were persons of agreeable manners, enlarged minds, and cultivated tastes; the conversation was animated and interesting, in spite of Miss Pratt's attempts to turn it into her own low channel by relating the bits of gossip she had picked up in her morning perambulations, and which she thought to set off with some trite moral reflection. There was occasionally music from both gentlemen and ladies,

[1] Wesley's "Journal."

which even Gertrude's fastidious ear acknowledged to be fine in its way, for all knew what they were saying or doing; and there were no mawkish attempts at singing in an unknown tongue; there was no "poetry strangled by music;" but "airs married to immortal verse,"

> "Untwisting all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony."

Ah! who can hear the divine strains of a Handel, or the dear familiar songs of their native land, without feeling their souls elevated, or their hearts melted into love and tenderness! Both were sung by different members of the company with much taste and feeling, but by none so much as by Mary Black, who, with seraphic sweetness, sang the inspired strain,

> "How beautiful are the feet of those
> Who bring the glad tidings of faith to man!"

"Everything that Miss Black sings must be charming," said Mr. Delmour, with his *fade* gallantry; "but if I may be permitted to offer an opinion, I should say there is perhaps something rather too sectarian in sacred music, unless upon solemn occasions; and I should be apprehensive that, were a taste for it to become general, it would prove destructive to every other species of composition—I may add, even to the fine arts in general." Mr. Delmour had a genteel horror at everything he deemed approaching to what he thought Methodism, though a most zealous supporter of the church in so far, but no farther, than it was connected with the state.

"Pardon me," said Miss Mary Black; "but it appears to me that such apprehensions are groundless; the blessing of God and the applause of posterity seem to have perpetuated the fame of genius devoted to religious subjects more than the fame of those men who abused their noble gifts by dedicating them solely to the service of their fellow-creatures."

"As instance?" asked Mr. Delmour, with an incredulous smile.

"True," said Mr. Lyndsay, "it certainly has been so in many instances. Milton is undoubtedly the first poet of our country, and what was his theme? He sang in noble strain of Him

'Unspeakable, who sit'st above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Thy lowest works.'

The greatest poet of Germany was Klopstock, and his subject the Great Messiah; and of his deathless work it has been well observed, that 'when music shall attain among us the highest powers of her art, whose words will she select to utter but those of Klopstock?' The noblest bards of Italy were Dante and Tasso; Metastasio has had recourse to sacred subjects for his operas; Racine for his Athalie; Young, in his "Night Thoughts," sang to Him who—

'From solid darkness struck that spark, the sun,'

invoking him to 'strike wisdom from his soul.' The amiable and elegant Cowper casts all his laurels at the feet of his Saviour:

'I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is, what it was,—dependence upon thee.'"

"You are really eloquent, Lyndsay," said Mr. Delmour, with an ironical smile; "but in the fervour of your zeal you have entirely overlooked those immortal, though profane authors, whose works are still more popular than any of those you have quoted —Shakespeare, for instance."

"Shakespeare is, perhaps, the most favourable exception," replied Mr. Lyndsay; "he is, indeed, a poet of Nature's own creating; but the dross of his compositions is daily draining off in improved editions, and even in theatrical representation, while the pure parts of his morality are not thought unworthy of being quoted from evangelical pulpits, and one day, I doubt not, it will be with him as with some of the poets I have just mentioned. They have written some things unworthy of their pens; but their fame is perpetuated only as the authors of what is pure and good. The profane and licentious works of Lord B. will live only in the minds of the profane and impure, and will soon be classed amongst other worthless dross, while all that is fine in his works will be culled by the lovers of virtue, as the bee gathers honey from even the noxious plant, and leaves the poison to perish with the stalk; so shall it be with Burns; so shall it be with Moore. The same argument applies to music. Handel derives his fame from his oratorios, and the "Creation" of Haydn will immortalise his name —a performance in which the genius of the composer

has struck a chord which calls forth any genius which happens to be in the breast of the audience. To mention the great painters who have dedicated a portion of their time and talents to sacred subjects would be to enumerate the whole catalogue; and I have already to apologise for having so long monopolised this subject," said he, turning to a clergyman who stood near him, and whose looks testified the interest he took in the debate—"when there are those present who could have done much more justice to the cause." Beneath the simple, meek, unpretending exterior of Mr. Z—— few would, indeed, have guessed at the profundity of his learning, the extent and variety of his acquirements, and the ardour of his zeal in the cause of Christianity. Firm in his principles, yet soft in his manners; warm in feeling, yet mild and gentle in temper; able to talk, yet willing to listen; his mind was full of information, while his manners were those of one seeking instruction.

Thus appealed to, Mr. Z—— was about to reply, when Miss Pratt interposed with, "What do you say to these two great writers, Fielding and Smollet? I suspect there's none of these you have mentioned will ever be half so popular as Tom Jones and Humphry Clinker."

"The works of Fielding and Smollet, even the more highly gifted ones of Voltaire and Rousseau, are passing away like noxious exhalations," said Mr. Z—— mildly. "If the principles of the age in which we live are equally defective with the former, at least

a better taste prevails, and grossness, profanity, and licentiousness are no longer the standards to which the young look with admiration. Impure writers are now chiefly known to impure readers; but where virtue and genius unite, their powers are known to all. Oh, what injury to the human mind is derived from the perusal of the works of writers whose corrupt imaginations have given the impulse to their licentious pens! Of such it may truly be said, though highly esteemed amongst men yet are they abominations in the sight of God. Yet, alas! how few look to that guiding principle which alone ought to direct the pen! how few consider that to do good, 'a work is not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapour of wine; nor to be attained by the invocation of Memory and her siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.'"[1]

There was so much Christian meekness, even in Mr. Z——'s fervour, that it was impossible not to be touched with his manner even where the matter failed to carry conviction along with it. Mr. Delmour affected to bow with deference to the opinions of a clergyman; the conversation took another turn; music succeeded, till at last the party broke up. Gertrude had been interested in the discussion, but soon it passed from her mind as "a lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice."

[1] Milton.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Let us proceed from celestial things to terrestrial."

CICERO.

"Jests are, as it were, sawce, wherebye we are recreated, that we may eat with more appetite; but as that were an absurd banquet in which there were few dishes of meat and much variety of sawces, and that an unpleasant one where there were no sawce at all, even so that life were spent idly where nothing were but mirth and jollity, and again that tedious and uncomfortable where no pleasure or mirth were to be expected."

SIR THOMAS MORE.

AGAIN Gertrude felt the bitterness of disappointment. She had watched and hung upon every syllable that Mr. Delmour had uttered; but he made no mention of his brother, and with all the timidity of love she felt it impossible to breathe the name on which her destiny was suspended.

The following morning saw Miss Pratt depart with all her packages, and many reiterated professions and promises; and scarcely had she left the house when Mr. Adam Ramsay arrived. As Uncle Adam's visits, like those of angels, were few and far between, his nieces welcomed him according to the rarity of the occurrence; and as he appeared to be in unusual good humour, he received their attentions with tolerable

civility. But even his civility was always of a rough nature; something akin to the embrace of a man-trap, or the gentle influence of a shower-bath; while his kindness commonly showed itself in some such untoward shape as was more grievous to be borne than aught that malice could invent.

"What's this come ower ye, my dear?" said he, addressing Gertrude with as much affection as it was in his nature to testify. "You're white, an' you're dull, an' you're no like the same creature you was;" and he gazed upon her with more of interest than of good breeding. His remarks, of course, called the colour into Gertrude's cheeks, and Miss Black, seeing her at a loss to reply, hastened to relieve her by throwing the blame, where in this climate it is always thrown, upon the weather. But Uncle Adam spurned the idea of the weather having the slightest influence on the health and spirits of anything but potatoes and leeches.

"The weather!" repeated he contemptuously. "You'll no tell me that a shower o' rain can bleach a young creature's cheeks white, or put the life out o' her een; but I'll tell you what it is, its the synagogin', the tabernaclin', the psalmin' that goes on in this hoose, that's enough to break the spirits o' ony young creature."

"My dear uncle——" said Miss Black, with a smile.

"Now I'm no gawin' to enter into ony o' your religious controversies," cried Mr. Ramsay, holding up his hand, and turning away his head; "but I'll tell

you what I'll do, my dear"—patting Gertrude on the shoulder—"I shall tak' you to see a sight that'll divert you, and drive away thae wild notions you've been getting your head stuffed wi'. To gang an' mak' a bairn like that miserable wi' your nonsense!" with a fresh burst of indignation at his nieces; then again softening down—"Put on your bannet, my dear, an' come wi' me. As I cam' up the street the noo I saw ane o' thae caravan things standing in the market-place, wi' a picktur o' a giant an' a dwarf hingin' on the outside, and tho' I wadna cross the floor to see aw the giants and dwarfs that ere were born, yet I ken young folk like ploys o' that kind; so put on your things and I shall treat you to the show;" and he put his hand into his pocket, and tumbled his money to and fro, as much as to say, "I have plenty of shillings and sixpences, and therefore you need have no scruples of delicacy as to taking advantage of my offer."

The cold drops stood upon Mrs. St. Clair's brow at the thoughts of her elegant distinguished daughter, the future Countess of Rossville, mingling with the *canaille* of a country town, in a caravan, to gaze upon a giant and a dwarf! What would Lord Rossville say? There was distraction in the thought, yet she dreaded to offend Uncle Adam by a hasty rejection of his plan. "We are all, I am sure, sensible of the kindness that prompts your offer, my dear uncle," said she, in her most conciliating manner; "but I am afraid the remedy you propose would only tend to

aggravate the evil. My daughter's complaint is headache, occasioned solely by the confinement to which she has been subjected for some days, and the close air of a caravan would be extremely prejudicial. If I could have given her an airing—but having no carriage of my own!" and the sentence died away in a sort of indistinct ejaculation about the misery of being dependent upon others for those accommodations.

"You might let her speak for hersel'," said Mr. Ramsay with some asperity; "say what you would like best, my dear;" and Gertrude, gladly availing herself of the excuse suggested, declared that fresh air would be her best restorative.

Mr. Ramsay pondered a while, still turning his money, like his thoughts, to and fro. At length, after an apparently severe struggle, he spoke—

"Weel, since that's the case, instead o' takin' you to the show I've no objections to hire a chaise and treat you to a ride. I shall step to the Blue Boar mysel' and order ane up, so you may be puttin' on your mantle, an' there will be room for three, so you can settle among yoursels which o' you is to gang."

Mrs. St. Clair had been caught in a snare of her own setting; she had thrown out a hint about a carriage, in hopes that her uncle's partiality for her daughter would have made him grasp at it at once, and that he would have been induced to set up one for her sole use and accommodation. This would have been a very convenient arrangement for her mother, who could not get the command of Lord Ross-

ville's quite so often as she wished. Her blood almost froze at the idea of a *ride* in a hackney-chaise; but it required more courage than she could master to oppose this second project, and, in silent despair, she saw Uncle Adam snatch up his little old rusty hat and set off. Her only hope was that the Blue Boar equipages would be all engaged, but that was soon at an end; for in a short time Uncle Adam was descried returning on foot, followed by a high-crowned, jangling, tottering chaise, with a lame brown horse and a blind gray one, urged along by a ragamuffin driver, seated on a wooden bar almost touching the windows.

Such was Uncle Adam's triumphant car; and not Boadicea, when dragged captive at the wheels of her conqueror, experienced bitterer feelings than did Mrs. St. Clair when she found herself compelled to take her place in this vehicle. True, she might have refused, but at the certainty of affronting Uncle Adam, who could stand anything but *airs*, and to affront seventy thousand pounds was a serious matter, especially in the present posture of affairs. The iron steps were thrown down with a mighty clang as far as they could reach, and having with some difficulty contrived to mount, she seated herself with great disgust and ill-humour, vainly attempting to disengage herself from the straw with which it was carpeted, and which at once seized upon her silk stockings and lace flounces.

"So much for the beauties of poverty," whispered she, in no very sweet accent, to her daughter, as she

took her place beside her. "For Heaven's sake, pull your bonnet more over your face, that you may not be recognised," and she carefully adjusted her own veil in triple folds over every feature. Mr. Ramsay followed, and the driver waited for orders.

"Whar wad ye like to gang to, my dear?" asked he of Gertrude; "but it's aw the same, ae road's just like anither—tak' the best and the driest," to the driver.

But Gertrude, who had got her cue from her mother, interposed, saying—

"If it is not disagreeable to you, my dear uncle, I should like to see your own Bloom Park."

"Bloom Park!" repeated Mr. Ramsay in evident discomposure; "what wud tak' ye to Bloom Park? What's put that in your head? I'm sure there's naething to be seen there."

"Pardon me," said Mrs. St. Clair, seeing her daughter would not urge the matter; "but that beautiful specimen you gave Gertrude of your green-house has made her absolutely pine to visit your flowers."

Mr. Ramsay's brow looked rather thundery; but, after demurring a little with himself, he desired the driver, in a voice of repressed anger, to take them to Bloom Park. The patched cracked windows were drawn up, the driver mounted his seat, the horses were with some difficulty set in motion, and off they went, the chaise rocking and jingling as though it would never reach its destination. To speak or at

least to hear, was out of the question, so the party proceeded on their pleasure-excursion in profound silence, till, at the end of an hour and a half of incessant jolting and clattering, they found themselves at the gate of Bloom Park. It was a fine, showy, modern place, with a large handsome house standing in the middle of an extensive but somewhat new-looking park, sprinkled with a few large old trees, and many young ones still in their cages. There was nothing picturesque or beautiful in the scenery; but there was much comfort, even luxury, denoted in the appearance of the gay, airy, spacious mansion, with its French windows, verandas, porticoes, and conservatory; in the smooth gravel walks, diverging in all directions; in the well-stocked fish-pond; in the stupendous brick garden-walls, with flues and chimney tops; in the extensive range of hothouses, and, in short, all the appliances of affluence and enjoyment. Nothing could look more unlike the place than the owner. That Mr. Adam Ramsay should have become the proprietor of such a place was the wonder of some and the ridicule of others. But the simple fact was that upon this very estate the race (if not the family) of Ramsays had been born and bred and lived, certainly time *immemorial*, for it was in the humble rank of cottars. Here also Lizzie Lundie had first seen the light; and here it was that Uncle Adam's youngest and happiest days had been spent; for here they had "ran about the braes, and pu'ed the gowans fine;" and "though seas between them braid had rolled" for many an

intervening day, and the grave had long closed over the object of his early affection, he still cherished the fond remembrance of auld lang syne. Before his return from India he had heard that the estate of Broomyknowes, now changed into Bloom Park, was in the market; he became the purchaser, partly as a means of investing money, which he was rather at a loss how to dispose of, and partly from a secret *penchant* towards it, which, however, he would have scorned to acknowledge, and perhaps of which he was scarcely aware. Great was his surprise and indignation, however, when he did visit it, at beholding the ravages refinement and luxury had committed upon the primitive charms of Broomyknowes; for, pilgrims as we are in a stranger-land, how do our souls cling with fond tenacity to the simple memorials of transient, childish, perished joys! But not a trace of his old haunts remained. The banks and braes and knowes had been all levelled with the dust; the little wimpling burn, fringed with saughs and hazels, where many a summer's day Lizzie and he used to "paiddle" for minnows, was gone to swell some mighty stream. The Mavis Hill, a rude, uninclosed eminence, covered with wild roses, and brambles and bluebells, and sloes, where many a mavis and lintie's nest had been found, was now a potato-field; not a whin scented the air,—and how often beneath India's burning sun had Uncle Adam sighed for a breeze from the whinny braes of his native land! But, worst of all, on the very spot where once stood his grand-

father's and his father's old green slimy cabins, with their fungous roofs, and their kailyards and their middens, now rose an elegantly-ornamented dog-kennel. *That* he instantly ordered to be demolished; indeed, it was said he had remained upon the ground to see it done; and from that time he had never looked near the place till now, that he had come in compliance with Gertrude's wish, but very contrary to his own inclination.

Mrs. St. Clair was in ecstasies with all she saw; the interior of the mansion was perfection, the suite of apartments elegant, the furniture superb—in short, there was not a superlative she did not exhaust in attempts to express her admiration. But the thought that was uppermost in her mind she would not have ventured to utter so readily, viz., that if the worst should happen, and Lord Rossville should discard his niece, there was another string to her bow at Bloom Park, and she could almost have been satisfied to have renounced the ambitious prospects of the one for the luxurious certainty of the other. But Mrs. St. Clair's raptures were completely thrown away upon Uncle Adam, who cared not a rush what she or any one else thought of his property, and he followed rather than led the way through his own house, with a kind of dogged impatience, as if his only wish were to be out of it. This was not lessened when, the news of his appearance having spread, he found himself beset by a host of retainers indigenous to an extensive and neglected property. Grieves, gardeners,

gamekeepers, tenants at will, and tenants on lease, all came thronging with wants to be supplied, and grievances to be redressed, and all looking with evil eyes on the visitors, in the fear of their becoming residents, and so ending their respective reigns; while the housekeeper, as she went swimming on before in all the conscious dignity of undisturbed power, detailed at great length all her own doings and sayings, with the various means used by her for the preservation of the furniture, and the annihilation of mice, moths, "clocks, and beasts of every description."

"Things are no just in the order I could wish," said the old curmudgeon of a gardener, as he unwillingly led the way to the kitchen-garden; "and there's an awfu' heat here; you'd better no come in for fear o' cauld, leddies," as he produced the key of the extensive range of hothouses; and, with a sour face, found himself compelled to fill a large basket with the choicest of fruits, which he had more profitable ways of disposing of.

At length Mr. Ramsay's patience was exhausted, and they set off loaded with the most exquisite fruits and flowers, which, as he possessed not the organs of either taste or smell for ought beyond haggis and southernwood, he looked upon merely as sort of artificial excrescences which grew about large houses.

"Noo," said he, addressing Gertrude, as he seated himself in the chaise, "I dinna begrudge this, if it's to do you ony gude; and, as I tell't you before, gang whan you like, and tak' what you like, but dinna ask

me to gang wi' you; for I'm ower auld noo to be plagued and deeved about drains and fences and young plantations, out o' doors; and pipes and plaster and aw the rest o't, within; and the gardener he canna get the apples keepit; and the gamekeeper he canna keep the pheesants preserved; an' I'm sure I dinna care though there was nae an apple or a pheesant in the kingdom, if they wud only let me alane."

"It unquestionably would be a great advantage to the place, as well as a relief to you, to have the house occupied, with some one who could take a judicious management——" began Mrs. St. Clair; but a bitter look from her uncle made her perceive she was treading on dangerous ground, and she allowed the noise of the carriage to drown the rest of the sentence.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Lord of love! what law is this,
That me thou makest thus tormented be?"

SPENSER.

THEY were returning by a different road from that which they had taken in going, and had not proceeded far when they were suddenly hailed by a pedestrian from the side of the road, and Major Waddell was immediately recognised. The chaise was stopped, and mutual salutations having been exchanged, was about to proceed, when the Major entered so vehement a remonstrance against their passing his door without inquiring in person after his dear Isabella that even Uncle Adam's flinty nature was forced to yield. Indeed, as they were within a few yards of the gate, it was scarcely possible for even Uncle Adam to hold out; and accordingly, preceded by the Major, the chaise turned up the romantic winding approach which conducted to the mansion. Black Cæsar, bowing and grinning, hastened to receive them, and usher them into the presence of massa's lady, who, in all her bridal finery, sat in the attitude of being prepared to receive her marriage guests. Having welcomed Mrs. and Miss St. Clair with a tone and manner of encour-

aging familiarity, "And my uncle, too! this is really kind. I assure you I'm quite flattered, as I know how seldom you pay visits to anybody."

Mr. Ramsay had entered with the heroic determination of not opening his lips during his stay; he therefore allowed that to pass with a sort of scornful growl; but Mrs. St. Clair, in her softest manner, took care to let her know that the visit was neither a premeditated nor a complimentary one, and that she owed it entirely to their accidental rencontre with the Major.

"Bless me, Major!" exclaimed the lady in a tone of alarm, "is it possible that you have been walking? And the roads are quite wet! Why did you not tell me you were going out, and I would have ordered the carriage for you, and have gone with you, although I believe it is the etiquette for a married lady to be at home for some time;" then observing a spot of mud on his boot, "And you have got your feet quite wet; for Heaven's sake, Major, do go and change your boots directly! I see they are quite wet!"

The Major looked delighted at this proof of conjugal tenderness, but protested that his feet were quite dry, holding up a foot in appeal to the company.

"Now, how can you say so, Major, when I see they are quite damp? Do, I entreat you, put them off; it makes me perfectly wretched to think of your sitting with wet feet; you know you have plenty of boots. I made him get a dozen pairs when we were at York, that I might be quite sure of his always having dry feet. Do, my love, let Cæsar help you off with these

for any sake!—for my sake, Major. I ask it as a personal favour."

This was irresistible; the Major prepared to take the suspected feet out of company with a sort of vague mixed feeling floating in his brain, which, if it had been put into words, would have been thus rendered—

"What a happy dog am I to be so tenderly beloved by such a charming girl; and yet what a confounded deal of trouble it is to be obliged to change one's boots every time my wife sees a spot of mud on them!"

"Now, you won't be long, Major?" cried the lady, as the Major went off, attended by Cæsar. "The Major is so imprudent, and takes so little care of himself, he really makes me quite wretched; but how do you think he looks?"

This was a general question, and rather a puzzling one.

"As ugly as possible," thought Gertrude, who would have been much at a loss to combine truth and politeness in her reply. Luckily there are people who always answer their own questions when no one else seems disposed to do it, and Mrs. Waddell went on—

"He certainly was much the better of Harrowgate; he was really looking so ill when he went there, that, I assure you, I was very uneasy."

"Whan did he ever look weel?" was ready to burst from Uncle Adam's lips; but by a magnanimous effort he drew them in, and remained silent.

"Have you been lately at Bloom Park, uncle? for I understand there are pretty doings going on there."

Mr. Ramsay's only reply was a deep sonorous hem, and a bow, something in the style of a bull preparing to toss.

"We are just come from thence," replied Mrs. St. Clair, immediately launching forth into raptures at all she had seen and tasted.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Waddell; "you have been either more fortunate or more favoured than I have been, for the Major and I went there yesterday and could get no admittance, which, I must say, I thought very odd. The people at the Lodge had the impertinence to refuse to let us in, which, to be sure, to a man of the Major's rank in life, and me a married woman, was a piece of insolence I never met with anything to equal; but I told them I would let you know of their behaviour."

"I'm obliged to you," was the laconic reply.

"I really think they deserved to be turned off for their insolence."

"Turned off for doing their duty?" demanded Uncle Adam, preparing to cast off his armour.

"A strange kind of duty, I think," retorted the lady in equal indignation, "to exclude your nearest relations from your house, and me a married woman, and a man of the Major's rank."

"I never excluded you frae my house, Miss Bell," quoth Uncle Adam, now divested of all restraint, and disdaining to recognise her by her married appella-

tion; "but if you mean that I'll no mak' you mistress o' my property you're perfectly right. What's your business at my house when I'm no there mysel'? What tak's you there?" in a key of interrogation at least equal to a squeeze of the thumb-screw.

"I think it was a very natural curiosity——"

"Naatral curiosity!" interrupted Uncle Adam, now brimming high; "a bonny excuse or else no for breakin' into other folks' hooses! I wonder what your naatral curiosity will lead you to next!"

"I think you are much obliged to anybody that will take the trouble of looking a little after your affairs in that quarter; for I must just tell you, uncle, that you are making yourself quite ridiculous by submitting to be plundered and cheated on all hands, and——"

"And what if it's my pleeshure to be plundered and cheated, Miss, by the poor instead o' the rich?"

"I really wish, uncle, you would recollect you are speaking to a married woman," said Mrs. Waddell with much dignity, "and that a man of the Major's——"

At that moment the Major entered, with a very red face, and a pair of new boots evidently too tight.

"You see what it is to be under orders," said he, pointing to his toes, and trying to smile in the midst of his anguish.

"It's lucky for you, Major, I'm sure, that you are; for I don't believe there ever was anybody on earth so careless of themselves as you are. What do you

think of his handing Lady Fairacre to her carriage yesterday in the midst of the rain, and without his hat, too? But I hope you changed your stockings as well as your boots, Major?"

"I assure you, upon my honour, my dear, neither of them were the least wet."

"Oh! now, Major, you know if you haven't changed your stockings I shall be completely wretched," cried the lady, all panting with emotion. "Good gracious! to think of your keeping on your wet stockings—I never knew anything like it!"

"I assure you, my dear Bell——" began the Major.

"Oh! now, my dearest Major, if you have the least regard for me, I beseech you put off your stockings this instant. Oh! I am certain you've got cold already—how hot you are," taking his hand, "and don't you think his colour very high? Now I'm quite wretched about you."

In vain did the poor Major vow and protest as to the state of his stockings—it was all in vain; the lady's apprehensions were not to be allayed, and again he had to limp away to pull off boots which the united exertions of himself and Cæsar had with difficulty got on.

"I really think my wife will be for keeping me in a bandbox," said he, with a sort of sardonic smile, the offspring of flattered vanity and personal suffering.

As he was quitting the room, his aid-de-camp, Cæsar, entered with a mien of much importance, and

in his jargon contrived to make it known that something had happened to springs of Massa Ramsay's chaise, that post-boy had gone to smith's to mend it, and that smith said chaise no be mend for soonest two hours.

"Then I shall find my way hame mysel'," cried Uncle Adam, starting up; "for I'll no wait twa hours upon ony chaise that ever was driven."

In vain were all attempts to detain him; he spurned the Waddell carriage, the Waddell dinner; refused even to wait till the Major had changed his stockings; in short, would do nothing but take his own way, which was to walk home, leaving Mrs. and Miss St. Clair to stay dinner and return in the evening.

No sooner was Uncle Adam's back turned than Mrs. Waddell gave free scope to her indignation against him. Turning to Gertrude—

"I really think he is much worse than he was, I don't think you have any credit in your managment of him, cousin; unless he alters his behaviour I don't think it will be possible for the Major to keep company with him. Did you hear how he Miss'd me today? me a married woman! if the Major had been present he must have resented it." Having at length exhausted her invectives, she next began to play off her airs by showing her house and furniture, boasting of her fine clothes, fine pearls, fine plate, fine connections; and, in short, taking all possible pains to excite the envy of her guests by showing what a thrice happy married woman Mrs. Major Waddell

was. But Mrs. St. Clair had seen too much to be astonished at Mrs. Waddell's finery, and Gertrude's more refined taste felt only pity and contempt for the vulgar sordid mind that could attach ideas of happiness to such things. Provoked at the indifference with which her cousin saw and heard all this, she said—

"I suppose, cousin, you are above regarding terrestrial objects now, since you have been living so long with our good aunts; I suppose you have learnt to despise the things of this world as beneath your notice."

"I have certainly learned to admire goodness more than ever I did before," said Gertrude, quite unconscious of the offence she had given by her indifference.

"Oh! then I suppose you are half-converted by this time; we shall have you one of the godly ladies next."

"If you mean by godly, those who resemble my aunts, I fear it will be long before I merit such an appellation; but, although, in comparison with them, I feel myself little better than a heathen, yet that does not hinder me from seeing and admiring their excellence; to deny merit to others, merely because one does not possess it themselves, is a sin, from which I shall ever pray, Good Lord, deliver me!"

"Oh, I see you are bit," cried Mrs. Waddell, with a toss of her head; "I know that sort of thing is very infectious, so I hope you won't bite me, cousin; for, however it may do with misses, I assure you it would

never answer in a married woman; and the Major has no notion of your *very good* ladies; he seems quite satisfied with me, bad as I am. Are you not, Major?" to the poor Major, who once more made his appearance re-booted, and trying to look easy under the pressure of his *extreme* distress.

"Now are you quite sure you changed your stockings, Major? Are you not cheating me? Cæsar, did the Major change his stockings?"

Cæsar, with a low bow, confirmed the important fact, and that interesting question was at length set at rest. Mrs. St. Clair was too politic to betray the disgust she felt; but Gertrude, alarmed at the prospect of sitting audience for the day to the Major and his lady, expressed her wish to take a walk.

"Dear me, cousin, are you so vulgar as to like walking?" exclaimed Mrs. Waddell; "I thought you would have been more of a fine lady by this time; for my part, I really believe I have almost forgot how to walk; when one has a carriage of their own, you know, they have no occasion to walk, and I suppose few people do it from choice; you have quite spoilt me for a pedestrian, Major."

Gertrude could not wait for the complimentary reply she saw about to issue from the Major's lips, but said—

"As I am still so vulgar as to like walking, though not so unreasonable as to insist upon others doing it, you will perhaps allow me to take a peep at the beauties of Thornbank by myself;" and she rose to

leave the room, when the Major interposed, and making a lame attempt to be agile—

"Oh, impossible! you must allow me to have the honour of escorting you."

"Now, Major," cried his lady, "I must lay my commands upon you not to stir out to-day again; it is a very damp, raw day; I am sure my cousin will excuse you,"—turning to Gertrude; "he had a most dreadful cold in his head last week—I assure you I was quite frightened at it."

"Phoo! nonsense, my dear," said the Major, still hovering between delight and vexation; "nobody would have thought anything of it but yourself."

"How can you say so, Major, when I counted that you sneezed seventeen times in the course of an hour and a half—and that's what he calls nonsense!"

Leaving the loving pair to settle this tender dispute, Gertrude contrived to steal away from them. "Oh! the luxury of solitude after the company of fools!" thought she, when she found herself outside the house, and alone.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

> "Now rest thee, reader! on thy bench, and muse
> Anticipative of the feast to come;
> So shall delight not make thee feel thy toil.
> Lo! I have set before thee; for thyself
> Feed now."
>
> DANTE.

THORNBANK was situated on the side of a rapid gurgling river, abounding in picturesque rocky scenery. It was a meek, gray, autumnal day, when earth borrows no tint from sky, but, rich in its own natural hues, presents a matchless variety of colour, from the wan declining green to the gorgeous crimson and orange — nature's richest, saddest panoply! The sweet mournful song of the robin was the only sound that mingled with the murmur of the stream. It was a day for musing and tender melancholy; a day that came o'er the heart "like a melody that's sweetly played in tune."

Trite as the reflections are which have been drawn from this solemn season, and obvious as is the moral which points to the heart at witnessing the decay of the beauties and the graces of the material world, still the same train of thought will naturally arise in every mind of sensibility, and the same sober hue insensibly

steals over the soul—"hues which have words, and speak to ye of Heaven."

Relieved from every tormenting object, Gertrude sat down on a rustic seat, hung round with many a drooping scentless flower, and resigning herself to the soothing influence of the day and the scene, she gradually sank into those enchanting day-dreams—those beautiful chimeras which a young romantic imagination can so readily create. The pleasures of imagination certainly were hers, but as if only to render her more susceptible to the annoyances of real life.

She was recalled from the illusions in which she had been indulging by sounds little in unison with the harmonious stillness that surrounded her; a weak giggling laugh falling at intervals upon the ear, its pauses filled by a sharp, loud, English tongue, louder and louder, still drew near; and presently Miss Lilly Black, leaning on the arm of a little, spruce, high-dressed young man, appeared. Much surprise and joy and affection was testified by Miss Lillias at this meeting with her cousin, and Mr. Augustus Larkins was introduced with an air of triumph and delight. Mr. Augustus Larkins was what many would have called a pretty young man; he had regular features, very pink cheeks, very black eyebrows, and what was intended for a very smart expression. He was studiously dressed in the reigning fashion, but did not look fashionable for all that. He had a sharp, high-pitched voice, and a very strong, but not a pure

English accent. Such was the future cousin to whom Miss St. Clair was now introduced; and with many flourishing bows, and with much mouthing about honour, pleasure, and so forth, on his part, the ceremony was happily got over.

"Dear me, cousin, have you been sitting here by yourself?" said Miss Lilly in a soft, pitying tone; "what a pity we did not know, and we could have come sooner; you must have been so dull!"

"I did not find it so," replied Gertrude.

"Ah, you Scotch ladies are all fond of solitude," cried Mr. Larkins: "Witness that noble apostrophe of my Lady Randolph's in your celebrated tragedy of Douglas, 'Ye woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom accords with my soul's sadness, and draws forth the tear of sorrow from my bursting heart!' How uncommonly well that was got up last season at Drury Lane; you have, of course, been in town, mem?"

Gertrude replied in the affirmative.

"And which of the houses did you give the preference to?"

She had not visited the theatres.

"No, sure! is it possible, mem, to have been in town without seeing either of the houses? How prodigiously unfortunate! But," with a significant smile to Miss Lilly, "I hope we shall have the pleasure of showing your cousin the lions by-and-bye. In town we call it showing the lions to show the sights and shows to our country cousins."

"Oh, that will be delightful! Won't it, cousin?" asked the simple Lilly; but her cousin only coloured with contempt at the idea.

"The theatre is a favourite amusement of mine," continued Mr. Larkins.

"And of mine too; I am *so* fond of the playhouse," said Miss Lilly, bent upon all occasions to prove the congeniality of their souls.

"Did you ever see Young in Romeo?"

"No, I don't think I ever saw Mr. Young act it, but I once saw a Mr. Something else—I forget his name—do it."

"La! I have seen Young at least a dozen times in Romeo; it is a favourite character of mine; indeed, I have the whole part by heart."

"Is that possible?" exclaimed Miss Lilly, in tenfold admiration of her lover's perfections; "do let us hear you repeat some of it; I'm sure my cousin would like it so much."

"You must learn Juliet, and then I shall be your Romeo; you would make a capital Juliet; your hair is exactly the colour of Miss O'Neil's."

"Is it really? How I should like if I could act Juliet!"

"When I have you in Liquorpond Street," whispered Mr. Larkins, "we shall have some famous scenes."

"That will be charming! I am *so* fond of deep tragedies!"

"You don't dislike comedy, I hope?"

"Oh, no, I delight in comedies and farces; I like farces very much too."

"Some of the after-pieces we have in town are famously good; what a prodigious run Midas had, for instance; 'Pray, Goody,' was sung for a whole season."

"Oh, 'Pray, Goody,' is without exception the most beautiful thing I ever heard!" exclaimed Miss Lilly, turning up her eyes in rapture.

"How amazingly you will be pleased with some of our pantomimes in town! What a famous good thing we had last winter at Covent Garden, called 'The Oyster in Love!'"—here Miss Lilly giggled.

"'Pon my soul, 'The Oyster in Love' was the title, and to let you into a little of a secret, it was composed, music and all, by a friend of mine——"

"Oh, goodness! was it really? Do tell us all about it."

"Why, the piece opens with a splendid marine view; waves—waves as high, mem, as these trees, and as white—as white as your gown, roaring in the most natural manner imaginable. Two of the ladies of my party, who had just returned from Margate, became, in short, perfectly sea-sick—'pon my soul, I thought they'd have fainted. However, it was the first night, and I was a friend of the author, so I wouldn't have stirred to have handed the finest woman in the house."

"Oh! you cruel creature!" cried Miss Lilly, with a giggle; "and what became of them?"

"Oh! they recovered with the assistance of smelling-bottles and oranges; but, 'pon my soul, I felt a little queer myself. Well, after the waves—these curly-headed monsters, as Shakespeare calls 'em—had rolled backwards and forwards, till, 'pon my honour, I thought they'd have been into the pit; at last they retired in the most graceful manner possible, leaving behind 'em an enormous large oyster at the foot of a rock; but the beautiful thing, mem, was to see the stage, which you know represented the beach, all covered with shells and spar and sea-weed. You can have no conception of anything so natural."

"Oh! how I should like to have seen it," sighed Miss Lilly.

"Well, then, there was this oyster, which you'd have sworn was a real oyster but for the size, lying at the bottom of the rock; then enters the divine Miss Foote, dressed as a princess, with the most splendid crown upon her head, all over with precious stones, but looking very melancholy, with her pocket-handkerchief in her hand. She is attended by a troop of young damsels, all very beautiful, and most beautifully dressed; they sing and dance a most elegant new quadrille; and while they are dancing the oyster begins to move, and heaves a deep sigh, upon which they all take to their heels, and dance off in all directions, shrieking most musically in parts. The princess, however, remains, draws near the oyster, contemplates it for some time, clasps her hands, falls upon her knees beside it, while it rolls, and heaves, and sighs;

'pon my honour, it was quite affecting; I saw several handkerchiefs out."

"How terrified I should have been!" exclaimed Miss Lilly.

"Well then, the princess sings that charming song, which, of course, you know,—

'This oyster is my world,
And I with love will open it.'

She then takes a diamond bodkin from her hair, and tries to open the shell. No sooner has she touched it than it opens a little bit, and the point of a beautiful long black beard comes out; the princess, in the greatest rapture, drops her bodkin, seizes the beard in both hands, kisses it, bedews it with her tears, presses it to her heart, and, in short, is in the greatest transports of joy at recognising her lover's beard."

"Good gracious! was the oyster her lover?" cried Miss Lilly.

"Wait and you shall hear. Well, while she is indulging in all these graceful demonstrations of the fondest affection, suddenly a sort of dragon or sea-horse starts up, seizes the bodkin and disappears. At the same moment the sky—that is, the stage—becomes almost quite dark, thunder and lightning ensue, the sea rises with the most tremendous noise, and threatens to engulf in its raging bosom the princess and the oyster——"

"How interesting!" exclaimed Miss Lilly; "I never heard anything like it!"

"The sea gains upon them every moment. Now

they are completely surrounded; she raises her eyes, sees the rock, a sudden thought strikes her, she merely stops to sing that sweet little air, 'By that beard, whose soft expression' (by-the-bye that was twice encored); then in the most graceful distress she begins to climb the rock."

"How high was the rock?" asked Miss Lilly.

"Why, I take it, not less than thirty feet high, and almost quite perpendicular. Soft music is heard all the time she is ascending. She stops when about half way up quite exhausted, then comes forward to the point of rock where she is standing, which, upon my soul, I don't think was larger than my hand; and, while she stops to recover her breath, sings one of your beautiful Scotch songs—

> 'Low down, in the broom,
> He's waiting for me;
> Waiting for me, my love,' etc.

Looking down upon the oyster all the while. There was a great row then: one half of the house called 'Encore,' the other 'Go on.' At length she was allowed to proceed, and she gains the top of the rock just as an enormous wave is on the point of overwhelming her oyster."

"Oh, how dreadful!" wailed the sympathising Lilly.

"What should you have done there?"

"Oh! I'm sure, I don't know."

"Well, she advances close to the edge of the rock —pon my soul, it made me a little giddy to see her! —takes off her crown, unbinds her hair, lays down

with her head hanging over the rock, and her hair falls down to the very bottom of the rock where the oyster is lying."

"Goodness! and her own hair?"

"Of course, you know a lady's wig becomes her own hair."

"Oh, you are so droll!" with a giggle.

"Well, the hair sticks to the oyster, or the oyster to the hair, I can't tell which, and slowly rising, she hoists him up, and up, and up—you might have heard a pin drop in the house while that was going on—till at last she has him on the very top of the rock! Then the house gave vent to its feelings, and a perfect tumult of applause and admiration ensued."

"No wonder; I can't conceive how she could do it. How big was the oyster?"

"Why, as large, I suppose, as a washing-tub."

"And to pull that up with her hair! Did you ever hear anything like it, cousin?"

"Never!" said Gertrude.

"Now, tell us what was acted next?"

"Then there's a fight between the dragon and a whale, and the whale throws up a fine diamond oyster knife at the feet of the princess; she seizes it, rat-tat-tats upon the shell, which instantly flies open with a prodigious noise, and out rushes a warrior, all clad in a complete suit of mother-of-pearl, with a fine long black-pointed beard, the same he had shook out of his shell; he slays the dragon; the sea becomes as smooth as glass; Venus rises out of it in a car

drawn by two doves harnessed with roses, and guided by two young Cupids."

"How delightful! And then, I suppose, they are married?"

"Ah! their happiness would have been very incomplete without that termination," said Mr. Larkins tenderly.

"It must be late," said Miss St. Clair, rising; "almost dinner time, I should suppose."

"Alas! that Love, whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will.
Where shall we dine?——"

cried Mr. Larkins in a theatrical manner. "You know, of course, that is out of Romeo."

"Oh, is it? I had forgot that, but it is beautiful," said the complaisant Lilly.

Mr. Larkins continued to talk and spout all the way home, and his fair to giggle and admire.

"Well, cousin," said she, seizing upon Gertrude, as they entered the house, "what do you think of him? Is he not charming?—so genteel, and so droll, and at the same time he has so much sensibility; he never travels without poetry; and he plays the flute, too, most beautifully. And he is so fond of the country; he says he is to drive me out of town every Sunday in his Tilbury. Oh, I wonder how Bell could ever fall in love with the Major! He hasn't the least taste for poetry; and Andrew is such an ugly name; don't you think I have been most fortunate in a name, for it is so uncommon to meet with an

Augustus; and I think Larkins very pretty too—don't you?"

But they were now at the drawing-room door, which put a stop to Miss Lilly's raptures, and soon after, dinner ended all *tête-à-têtes*.

Mrs. Major Waddell played the Nabob's lady as though she had been born a Nabobess; she talked much and well of curry and rice, and old Madeira, and the liver, and the Company,—which did not mean the present company, but the India Company. Her silver corners were very handsome, and she had to take off some of her rings before she could carve the grouse. In short, nothing could be better of its kind. Nevertheless, Mrs. Major had her own petty chagrins, as every petty mind must have; nobody seemed sufficiently dazzled with the splendour which surrounded them, and Mr. Larkins had the ill breeding to talk much of Birch's turtle and Thames salmon and town. At tea it was still worse; like all under-bred people he mistook familiarity for fashionable ease, and either lounged upon her fine sofa or stood with his back to the fire.

At length the chaise was announced, and as Mrs. and Miss St. Clair took leave, the gallant Major presented his arm. "Oh, now, Major, I hope you're not going to the door without your hat, and at this time of night! Now, it will make me perfectly wretched; pray now, Major—aunt—cousin—Mr. Larkins—for Heaven's sake——"

Mrs. Waddell was getting hysterical, and the poor

Major withdrawing his offered aid, Mr. Larkins advanced.

"And, oh! put on your hat!" sighed Miss Lilly in imitation, as he boldly presented his brush head to the evening air.

> "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ears——"

spouted Mr. Augustus, as he handed the ladies into the carriage. They bowed and drove off.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"On s'ennuie très bien ici."
VOLTAIRE.

BUT the present order of things could not long endure. Mrs. St. Clair grew impatient under the secret sense of her sisters' superiority, and weary of their simple uniform style of living. Her habits were luxurious, her mind was joyless. Gertrude, too, in all the restlessness of suspense, longed to return to Rossville. She would there hear her lover's name mentioned; she would be amidst the scenes with which his image was associated, and there would be enjoyment even in these shadowy fantastic pleasures. While such were the feelings of the mother and daughter, Lord Rossville felt no less impatient for the return of his niece, not for the charms and graces of her society, but because she was a being subject to his management and control. True, this act of rebellion might have staggered his faith as to the extent of his dominion; but he flattered himself that was a sort of thundercloud, which, by the wise and vigorous measures he had adopted, must already have passed away. Besides, Gertrude's prolonged absence would have an appearance in the eyes of the world; suspi-

cions might arise; things might be said. Even in the bustle of electioneering Mr. Delmour had remarked upon the impropriety of Miss St. Clair being allowed to reside so long in a paltry provincial town, and associating with people who might be very good in their way, but were not quite suited to her station, or such as he would wish his wife to be intimate with. On the other hand, Mrs. St. Clair, in the course of her correspondence with the Earl, had taken care to insinuate that such was Mr. Adam Ramsay's partiality for her daughter, it was more than probable he would make a point of her residing entirely with him unless she were speedily recalled to his Lordship's protection. The visit to Bloom Park strengthened this insinuation, and decided him as to the necessity of immediately recalling his niece.

A most laborious and long-winded letter was therefore penned to Miss St. Clair, in which, while he deprecated the idea of ever taking her into his favour until she had renounced the error of her ways, he at the same time announced his intention of receiving her again under his roof, in the confident hope that she would ere long perceive the absolute necessity and imperious duty she was under of acceding to his long-projected, thoroughly-digested, and firmly-determined-upon plan for her ultimate disposal. His Lordship next proceeded to state that he had consulted the most eminent counsel as to the deeds of entail, and that three of them were of opinion that the whole of the property could and might be most effect-

ively alienated, disponed, and otherwise disposed of, to the utter exclusion of Miss St. Clair as heiress-at-law. Such being the case, it was his firm intention and absolute purpose to act upon this opinion by executing a new deed of entail within three months from the present date, unless, before the expiry of that period, Miss St. Clair should think proper to accede to his plan and pursue the course he had pointed out to her. Such was the substance of a letter filling nearly seven pages of closely-written paper.

"I am sorry—very sorry," said Gertrude, with a sigh, as she finished reading it, "for the trouble and vexation I am causing Lord Rossville; and perhaps it were better that I should never return to Rossville again than that I should go there only to make him cherish hopes which never can be realised. I never can act as he would have me—I never can change my sentiments."

"You can at least keep your sentiments to yourself, considering how much is at stake on their account," said her mother, with asperity; "and, indeed, setting everything else out of the question, I think delicacy alone demands that much of you; at least, I should be cautious how I expressed an attachment which to all appearance is no longer, if indeed it ever was, reciprocal."

"Even were it so," replied her daughter, making an effort to repress her emotion, while her faltering voice betrayed the anguish of such a supposition,

"deceived I may be myself, but I never will deceive others; let, then, Lord Rossville know that if I return to his house I return unchanged—unchangeable."

"Beware how you provoke me, Gertrude, for I too am unchanged—unchangeable in my determination never to see you the prey of that man. I have pledged my word it shall not be."

"Pledged your word!" repeated her daughter indignantly; "who had a right to demand such a pledge?"

"One who has the right and will exercise it," said Mrs. St. Clair, in some agitation; "but this is wandering from the point. You have promised you will not enter into any engagement until you have attained the age of twenty-one; on that promise I rely. Meanwhile, all I require of you is only what is due to yourself; leave me, therefore, to manage matters with the Earl, and do you remain passive for the present."

"I am sick of management, of mystery," exclaimed Gertrude dejectedly; "already," cried she, giving way to tears, "I am almost weary of the world; I feel myself a puppet; a slave—nay, the slave of a slave; subject, it seems, to the control of a very menial; but I will not endure this mockery of greatness, mingled, too, with such degradation."

There was a height and a depth in the feelings of Miss St. Clair which, when once roused, her mother could not always contend with. She sometimes felt that her only chance of victory was in appearing to yield; and upon this occasion, as upon many others,

she contrived to work upon her daughter's affections, and prevailed upon her to acquiesce in her wishes, provided she were not considered as a party in Lord Rossville's plans.

The following day the Earl's equipage and attendants arrived; and again Mrs. St. Clair's worldly mind exulted as she looked on the proud pageant at which the whole town of Barnford had turned out to gaze. It was not without emotion Gertrude bade adieu to her aunts, who were not less affected at parting with her; they saw she was not happy, but were too delicate to intrude upon her confidence.

"Farewell, my love," said her Aunt Mary, as she pressed her in her arms; "and ever bear in mind that, in this world, not to be grieved, not to be afflicted, not to be in danger, is impossible. Yet, dearest Gertrude, even in this world, there *is* a rest of heart—ah! would you but seek it where only it is to be found!"

But to the young unchastened spirit nothing seems less desirable than that rest of heart which in their minds is associated with the utter extinction of all that is noble and graceful and enthusiastic; and Gertrude shrank from the wish breathed for her by her aunt.

"No," thought she, "wretched as I am, yet I would not exchange my feelings, tortured as they are, for that joyless peace which is to me as the slumber of the dead!"

And where is the youthful ardent spirit, untaught

of Heavenly love, which has not, at some period of its life, perilled its all on some baseless fabric, and preferred even the shattered wreck of its happiness to the waveless calm of indifference?

Gertrude's melancholy was not diminished by her return to Rossville. But a few weeks had passed since she had left it in all the pride and magnificence of early autumn, while nature seemed scarcely past its prime, while life was in the leaf and spirit in the air, and the bright toned woods glowed in all their variegated splendour beneath a clear blue sky and cloudless sun.

" And now the cold autumnal dews are seen
  To cobweb every green;
And by the low-shorn rowans doth appear
  The fast declining year;
The sapless branches doff their summer suits,
  And wane their winter fruits;
And stormy blasts have forc'd the quaking trees
  To wrap their trembling limbs in suits of mossy frieze."

In plain prose, it was a bleak, raw, chill November day, when nature seems a universal blank even to her most ardent admirers; and to use an artist phrase, nothing could be more *in keeping* with the day than the reception Miss St. Clair met with from her uncle. It was cold, formal, and unkindly, and every word fell like a drop of petrifying water on her heart.

Lord Rossville never had been upon easy terms with his niece; indeed, it was not in his nature to be upon easy terms with anybody; but the additional stiffness and solemnity and verbosity he thought

proper to assume were truly appalling, and caused her something of that sensation sensitive beings are said to feel while under the influence of a thunder-cloud.

The Earl's aspect was, indeed, enough to blight hope itself. There was positive determination in every line and lineament; his eyes had grown rounder, his eyebrows higher, his lips more rigid, his hands longer, his steps were more ponderous, his head was immovable; there was no speculation in his eye; his very wig looked as hard as marble. In short, over the whole man was diffused an indescribable air of hopeless inflexibility.

There was no company—nothing to relieve the hard outline of the piece—not even the usual members of the family; nobody but Lady Betty and her eternal rug and her fat lap-dog and her silly novel; and the dulness and tedium which reigned may have been felt but cannot be described.

CHAPTER L.

"If thou hast dipt thy foot in the river, yet pass not over Rubicon."—SIR THOMAS BROWN.

SEVERAL days passed in this state of cheerless monotony, when one morning, as the ladies pursued their different avocations in unsocial companionship, a letter was brought to Mrs. St. Clair, which she had no sooner opened than Gertrude observed her change colour and betray visible signs of agitation. The servant said the bearer waited an answer, and in manifest confusion she rose and left the room. Although superior to the meanness of curiosity, Miss St. Clair could not help feeling a natural desire to know the contents of a letter which had produced so visible a change on her mother, and she sat a considerable time vainly looking for her return. At length, unable to repress her anxiety, she put aside her drawing-materials, and hastened to her mother's dressing-room. Upon entering she found Mrs. St. Clair seated at a table, with writing implements before her, and her head resting on her hand, seemingly buried in profound meditation.

"I was afraid something was the matter, mamma," said her daughter, gently advancing towards her.

"Leave me!" cried her mother in an angry impatient tone; "leave me, I say—I can't be disturbed."

"Mamma, can I do nothing for you?" asked her daughter, as she reluctantly prepared to obey.

"Much, much," murmured Mrs. St. Clair, with a deep sigh; "but at present I desire you will leave me," raising her voice in an authoritative tone; and Gertrude, however unwillingly, found herself compelled to obey. Uneasy and restless, she could not compose her mind to any of her ordinary occupations. She saw something had occurred to agitate her mother, and she longed to participate, and, if possible, to aid her in her distress. After a while she again returned to her, and was again repulsed with anger. Seeing that her presence only caused irritation, she desisted from further attempts; and, taking advantage of a watery gleam of sunshine, which streamed from a pale, sickly sky, she set out on a solitary ramble to which fresh air and exercise only could give a zest. She slowly pursued her way through leafless woods, where the only sounds she heard where those of her own footsteps amongst the fallen leaves, and the monotonous rush of the swollen stream. But each step was fraught with sad, yet soothing recollections —for rocks, woods, and waters seemed all as the registers of her lover's vows; and in each silent memorial she felt as though she looked on the living witness of his faith. Thus nursing her fond contemplations, she had wandered a considerable length of way, when she was roused to observation by the

sudden darkness of the sky; but whether caused by the lateness of the hour, or the approach of a storm, she was not sufficiently mistress of signs and times to ascertain. Whichever it might be, it had the effect of dispelling all romance, and making her wish herself once more safe at home. She was, however, more than two miles from it by the way she had come; but if she could get across the river there was a short cut which would take her home in ten minutes, and she walked a little farther on in search of some stepping-stones which had been placed there instead of a bridge, which had been swept away by what, in the language of the country, is called a *speat*.

A great deal of rain had fallen the preceding night, and the river was so much swollen she could scarcely recognise the huge blocks by which she had frequently crossed the clear pebbly stream when it scarcely laved their sides. Now they merely held their broad heads above the brown sullen waters, but still they were above it; and, trusting to her own steady head and firm step, she with some little palpitation, placed her foot on the first stone. "*C'est ne que la première pas qui coute*," said she to herself; but notwithstanding this comfortable assurance, there she stood for some minutes ere she had courage to venture on a second step. But the sky was getting blacker, and some large straggling drops of rain began to fall. Ashamed of her irresolution, she was about to proceed, when she heard some one calling loudly to her to stop, and immediately she beheld Mr. Lyndsay approaching at

full speed on horseback. In an instant he urged his horse into the river, but the current was so strong it was with the utmost difficulty the animal was enabled to gain the opposite side.

"Is it possible," cried Lyndsay, as he threw himself off, "that you are going to attempt to cross the river in its present state?"

"I not only mean to attempt but to succeed," answered she, as she felt her courage rise to its utmost pitch, since she had now an opportunity of displaying it; and she was about to proceed, when he seized her hand—

"You are not aware of the danger; the river, you may see, is far above its usual height, and is rising every moment. A great deal of rain has fallen, and a fresh flood will be down directly."

"Well, it seems merely a choice of evils, as I seem destined to be drowned one way or another," said Gertrude, as the rain now began to fall in earnest.

"I assure you, then, you will find it much the least evil to be drowned on dry land, so pray take my advice for once."

But Gertrude felt as though it were due to Colonel Delmour to accord nothing to Mr. Lyndsay, against whom she laboured to keep up what she deemed a due resentment, and she therefore persisted in her intention.

"I am far from desiring Mr. Lyndsay's attendance," said she somewhat disdainfully. "I beg he will take his way, and allow me to take mine."

Lyndsay made no reply but by hastily snatching her from the place where she stood; and at the same instant, a sound as of many waters was heard, a sea of foam was tearing its course along—and, in the twinkling of an eye, the stones were buried in the waves. For some moments Gertrude remained motionless, gazing on the mass of discoloured waters as they roared along, till she was roused by the cry and the struggle of some living thing, which was swept past with the speed of lightning, and ingulfed in the raging flood. She turned shuddering away; and Lyndsay, taking her arm in his, would have led her from the spot; but, smote with the sense of her own injustice towards him, she exclaimed, "Not till I have here acknowledged my rashness—my folly; you risked your life to save mine, while I—unjust—ungrateful, that I was——"

"Not to me, my dear cousin, is any such acknowledgment due," said Mr. Lyndsay mildly; "give your thanks to God; only let us be friends."

Gertrude gave him her hand. "When can I cease to look upon you as my friend?—you who have saved me from destruction!"

Lyndsay sighed, but made no reply, and they walked on in silence, till the rain, which had hitherto fallen at intervals in an undecided manner, now burst forth, in what in Scotland is emphatically called an *even-down pour.* Neither rocks nor trees afforded any shelter, but they were now in sight of a summer-house, and thither they hastened. While Lyndsay stopped

on the outside to fasten his horse, intending to leave him until he could send his servant to fetch him home, Gertrude rushed in, and almost blinded by the rain did not at first perceive that some one had already taken possession of it, and was pacing up and down with visible signs of impatience. But, at her entrance, the person turned quickly round, and she encountered the sharp baleful glance of Lewiston.

"Ha! this is more than I expected," cried he, in an accent of pleasure and surprise; then taking her passive hand, "This is well—this is as it should be; come, my pretty messenger, sit down, don't be afraid."

But this caution, though uttered in a soft, conciliating manner, was in vain. At first amazement had rendered Gertrude mute and motionless; but as he attempted to seat her and place himself beside her she instantly regained her faculties, and struggling to release herself from his hold, she called loudly—

"Mr. Lyndsay, save me! oh, save me!"

But Mr. Lyndsay had withdrawn a few yards to place his horse under the shelter of a projecting rock, and the roar of the river drowned all other sounds.

"Fool!" exclaimed Lewiston, as he held both her hands, and squeezed them with almost painful violence; "be still, I tell you—be still, and you have nothing to fear; but if you provoke me, by Heaven, you will rue the day you first saw the light!" and he compelled her to be seated.

Gertrude would have spoken, but the words died

on her lips, and she sat pale and trembling, unable to articulate.

"Why, this is foolish," cried he, but in a gentler tone: "very foolish. Have I not told you that you have nothing to fear—that I love you too well?—— The deuce! cannot you be quiet?" as Gertrude again called wildly on Mr. Lyndsay. "Why did you come here only to squall, you simpleton? Why did she not come herself, and where is the money? Answer me, I say. A squire, by Jupiter!" exclaimed he fiercely, as Lyndsay now entered. "Well, sir, what is your business here?"

Mr. Lyndsay started with surprise as he beheld Miss St. Clair seated by the side of this man, whom he instantly recognised as the same from whom he had formerly rescued her; but her extreme paleness and the terror depicted on her countenance showed what her endurance cost her. The insolent question was repeated in a still higher key. Even Lyndsay's usual calmness was almost overcome, but he repelled the rising of his wrath, and answered—

"My business here is to protect this lady from insult or intrusion," and advancing to her, he placed himself by her side.

"Oh, let us begone!" cried Gertrude, as she rose and took hold of his arm; but she trembled so much she could scarcely stand.

"You cannot go yet," said Lyndsay; then turning to Lewiston—"but as your presence seems to agitate Miss St. Clair, I must request of you to withdraw."

"By what right, sir, do you interfere between this lady and me?" demanded he fiercely.

"I know of no right you have to ask me such a question," said Mr. Lyndsay coolly.

"*You* know of no right I have! and pray what do you know of me or my rights?"

Lyndsay's blood rose at this continued insolence; but making an effort to master his spirit, he replied—

"You say true, I know nothing of you; but I know you can have no right to alarm Miss St. Clair; if you have any claim upon her notice this is neither a place nor a time for it."

"Her notice!" repeated Lewiston, with a scornful smile. "Well, be it so! I *have* claims upon her notice, then, and you will do well to leave us to settle our own affairs."

"Oh, no—no!" cried Gertrude, as she clung to her cousin's arm, "do not leave me. I have nothing to say." But as she thought of her mother's mysterious connection with him she trembled while she disclaimed him.

"Do not be afraid," said Lyndsay, trying to reassure her; "there is nothing to fear, except insolence; and that I shall spare you, if this gentleman will walk out with me for a few minutes."

"I have already told you that I have no business with you, sir," said Lewiston; "and the insolence is yours, who thus break in upon my appointments. Come, my dear," to Gertrude, "rid yourself of your spark quietly, for I don't wish to harm the young man; tell him the truth, and bid him begone."

Never in his life had Mr. Lyndsay's self-control been so severely tried, but he still had firmness to keep himself in check.

"I know of no appointment," said Gertrude faintly, as she thought of the letter her mother had that morning received; "accident alone brought me here."

Lewiston looked steadfastly at her.

"You are sure that is the case? Take care how you attempt to deceive me—your hand upon it."

Gertrude involuntarily recoiled.

"How dare you thus presume?" cried Lyndsay passionately; but in an agony of terror, she hastily held out her hand. Lewiston seized it, and holding it up with an air of insolent triumph—

"'Tis well you obeyed me—else, by all the saints, in another second I should have had you on your knees before me."

"Audacious villain!" exclaimed Mr. Lyndsay, provoked beyond further forbearance, and seizing him by the collar, shook him with a force that made him stagger. "This lady's presence alone prevents me from punishing you as you deserve."

Gertrude shrieked, as Lewiston instantly drew a small dagger-sword from his walking cane.

"Do you see that?" cried he, with a scornful laugh. "How easily I could pink one of those fine eyes of yours, or open a vein for you, and let out a little of your hot blood; but I don't think the worse of you for this exploit, and only give you this little piece of

advice, before you talk of punishing to be sure you have the means in your own hands."

"I thank you," said Lyndsay, as he led Gertrude to the door; then turning back, he added in a low voice—"and I shall return to repeat my acknowledgments—only wait me here."

The rain had not ceased, but its violence had abated, and they walked on for some time in silence, till they both at the same moment descried Mrs. St. Clair approaching, muffled in a large cloak; but she too seemed to have perceived them, for she instantly turned back, and in another moment disappeared by one of the many paths which traversed the wood.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gertrude, with a burst of bitter feeling at this confirmation of her mother's clandestine intercourse. "Oh! that the flood from which you saved me had swept me away, rather than that I should live to endure this degradation!"

"My dear cousin," said Mr. Lyndsay gently, "do not give way to such dreadful thoughts; were you steeped in crime you could not do more than despair—even then you ought not to do that."

"Crime there must be somewhere," cried Gertrude in the same tone of excitement; "else why all this mystery, and why am I subjected to the insults of that man, unless——"

"Do you know who and what he really is?" said Mr. Lyndsay.

"Oh, ask me no questions!" cried she again, giving way to tears.

"Pardon me, I have done wrong; it is not from you I ought to seek information."

"Seek it not at all—leave me to my fate—abject and degraded I already am in your eyes."

"How little you know me if you think that circumstances, over which you evidently have no control, could ever lessen you in my eyes! It is not the misdeeds of others that can touch your soul, and they ought not to influence your character. There is not—there cannot be, degradation but in personal sin."

"Yet I owe it entirely to your generous confidence that I am not suspected—despised——"

"Suspicion itself scarcely could suspect you; and for despising you—do not think so falsely, so meanly of yourself, as to imagine that any one would dare to despise you. I fear something is wrong, and that you are not in good hands; but put your trust in God, my dear cousin, preserve your own natural integrity, and all will one day be right. Meantime, if I can be of service to you, look upon me as a friend—as a brother; will you promise me this?"

Gertrude, in somewhat calmer accents, promised she would. Lyndsay continued to talk to her in the same soothing yet strengthening strain till they reached the Castle, when they separated with sentiments of reciprocal interest and regard.

CHAPTER LI.

"What man so wise, so earthly witt so ware
As to descry the crafty cunning traine,
By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,
And cast her colours died deep in graine,
To seem like truth, whose shape she well can feigne."
Faery Queen.

No sooner had Mr. Lyndsay seen Miss St. Clair safe within the castle walls than he instantly retraced his steps, with the intention of returning to the summer-house for the purpose of extricating her, if possible, from the mysterious thraldom in which she seemed to be held by this person. At the midnight rencontre in the wood he had asserted a right over her, which, although she herself had disclaimed with almost frantic wildness, her mother had tacitly acknowledged by not directly denying. In the short conversation he had held with Mrs. St. Clair subsequent to that meeting, she had with tears implored his silence, his secrecy, his forbearance; and in broken and indirect terms had given him to understand that this person had been engaged with her husband in certain money transactions, which, out of regard to his memory, she was desirous of keeping concealed; and it was upon this ground he had asserted a claim

upon Miss St. Clair's fortune, which he had unwarrantably extended to her hand. This mangled and absurd account could not impose upon Lyndsay, but at that time he was almost a stranger to Mrs. St. Clair, and did not conceive himself authorised to interfere in her concerns. He therefore contented himself with mildly admonishing her on the impropriety of such clandestine meetings, and recommending to her to lay this person's claims before Lord Rossville, as the proper protector of his brother's memory and his niece's interest. In the meantime, he yielded to Mrs. St. Clair's entreaties, and gave her his promise not to divulge what had passed, upon her solemn assurance that the affair was in the way of being amicably adjusted, and that she had taken effectual means of ridding herself for ever of this person's importunity. This promise, it now appeared, had not been kept; again Miss St. Clair had been exposed to fresh insult in his presence, and he now thought himself entitled to interpose. With this purpose he walked quickly back, and had almost reached the summer-house when he was met by Mrs. St. Clair; her countenance was agitated, and traces of tears were visible in her eyes. She did not, however, now seem to shun him, for she stopped and extended her hand to him, saying—"You are the very person I most wish to see; give me your arm, and let us return together, I have much to say to you."

"But there is a person there to whom I also have much to say; and I cannot have the honour of attend-

ing you till I have first spoken with him." And he was passing on when Mrs. St. Clair caught his arm—

"I know whom you seek; but spare yourself the trouble—he is gone."

"Where?—which way?" eagerly demanded he; "but I must ascertain that myself," and he ran with all his speed to the summer-house; but it was deserted; and, though he looked long and keenly in all directions, not a trace of any one was to be seen. He was therefore obliged to retrace his steps, and soon overtook Mrs. St. Clair.

"You would not give credit to me, then?" said she, in a tone of reproach.

"I shall give credit to you now," answered he, "if you will tell me where I am likely to find the person I left here half an hour ago."

"I cannot tell; and if I could, perhaps I would not. No good could possibly result from your meeting; your wish, I know, is to befriend my daughter and myself; and be assured I am far from insensible of the value of such a friend. But come with me; I have much to say to you, much to confide to you of my dearest Gertrude."

Mrs. St. Clair's hyperbolical jargon was always offensive to Mr. Lyndsay's good taste and right feeling; but there was something absolutely revolting in it at this time; there was something so strained and unnatural in it—such a flimsy attempt at thus seeming to court explanation, that he felt armed against the duplicity he was aware would be practised upon him.

"At another time I shall be ready to listen to

anything which concerns Miss St. Clair," said he coldly; "but at present I wish to put a few questions to the person——"

"Pardon me; but I know all you would say, my dear Mr. Lyndsay; and you must allow me to anticipate those questions by the confidential communication I am now about to make to you. On your honour, on your secrecy, I know I may place the most unbounded reliance; I therefore require no assurances to satisfy me."

"I certainly can give none until I know how far secrecy may be compatible with honour."

Mrs. St. Clair affected not to hear this implied doubt, but went on—

"You have now had opportunities of becoming acquainted with my daughter; of forming your own opinion of her character; of—pardon a mother's vanity—of appreciating her charms and her graces; but you know not, none but a mother can know, the treasures of her heart and mind."

Mrs. St. Clair paused and sighed, and Mr. Lyndsay was too much surprised at such an opening to make any reply.

"Judge, then, at my grief and anguish at finding this gifted being, this idol of my affections, ensnared by the artifices of one every way unworthy of her; has been led to bestow her regards——"

"Pardon me," cried Lyndsay; "but I can have no possible right to be made the depositary of Miss St. Clair's sentiments by any but herself. I must be

excused from listening to anything more on that subject; I simply wish to know where I am likely to find the person who has twice in my presence dared to insult her."

"Yet it is only by hearing me patiently, and suffering me to take my own way in divulging the circumstances of the case as I think best, that I can possibly make you acquainted with them; either my lips must be sealed as to the whole, or you must listen to the whole without interruption. I am mistaken if I tell you anything new when I allude to my daughter's misplaced partiality, still more mistaken if her future happiness is a matter of indifference to you."

Lyndsay made no answer; he felt that Mrs. St. Clair was weaving a web around him, but he could not bring himself to burst from its folds, and he suffered her to proceed.

"I will not attempt to paint to you the anguish of my heart at discovering that the innocent affections of my unsuspecting child had been thus artfully and insidiously worked upon by Colonel Delmour. I know him, and you know him, to be a selfish, mercenary, unprincipled man, as incapable of appreciating such a being as Gertrude as she would have been of bestowing her affections on a character such as his, had not her imagination been dazzled and misled. But, alas! at seventeen where is our judgment and discrimination? Yet at seven-and-twenty they will come too late; then, long before then, if she becomes the wife of Colonel Delmour, she will be the most

wretched of women. Formed to find her happiness solely in the being she loves—noble, generous, upright, sincere herself, what will be her feelings when the mask drops, as drop it will, from this idol of her fancy, and she beholds him in his native deformity. No! sooner than see her the wife of Colonel Delmour, I take Heaven to witness I would rather look upon her in her coffin."

Inflated as all this was, still there was much of truth and right feeling in it, and he insensibly forgot his suspicions and listened with profound attention.

"Yet I dare not express to Lord Rossville all that I feel, for neither can I accede to his views for the disposal of my daughter. Gertrude has too much taste and feeling, too much heart and soul, to be sacrificed to family pride and political influence; in fact, as far as regards her happiness, there is but a choice of evils in these brothers; but there is one——" she stopped and hesitated—"there is one to whom I would with pride and pleasure have confided my dearest treasure in the certainty that, as her judgment matured, so her love and esteem would increase towards that one. Why should I conceal from you my wish?"

Mrs. St. Clair made a full stop, and looked at Mr. Lyndsay in a manner he could not misunderstand.

This was something he had not anticipated; it went far beyond what he had calculated upon, and he was thrown off his guard. His features betrayed his emotion, although he remained silent. There was a long pause. At length Mrs. St. Clair resumed—

"The time will come when the veil will fall from my daughter's eyes; as her judgment ripens her imagination will decline; already I can perceive the work is begun, and time is all that is wanting to finish it; but if, as may happen, she is hurried into a clandestine engagement, my hopes, her happiness, will be for ever blasted! On the other hand, if, by any sacrifice, any stratagem, I can save her, can you blame me for the attempt, however wild or desperate it may appear?"

"I certainly could not blame a sacrifice, however vain it might prove," said Lyndsay; "but I must always disapprove of stratagems, even when successful; both together seem to me incompatible."

For a moment Mrs. St. Clair was thrown into confusion by this remark, but, quickly rallying, she replied—

"Yet the one may prove the consequence of the other—in my case I fear it has; and that in using what I conceived an allowable stratagem to save my daughter I have sacrificed what I value next—the good opinion and esteem of Mr. Lyndsay."

"It rests with yourself to remove any unfavourable impression I may have received, a few words will suffice."

"I feel that you will blame me—that you will condemn the step I have taken," said Mrs. St. Clair, in evident embarrassment; "it must appear to you strange, unworthy, unnatural; but you know not the difficulties of my situation: Gertrude rash and un-

governable, Lord Rossville inflexible and exacting. If she marries Colonel Delmour her fortune and her happiness are both alike blasted; to save her from that—at least to gain time, can you altogether condemn me if I have taken advantage of this person's unwarranted claim upon her fortune to induce a belief in her mind that that claim does in reality extend to her hand, and that——But, oh Heavens!" exclaimed she, as they suddenly came in sight of the Castle, "it must be very late; lights in the drawing-room, and company assembled!—if I am missed—— To-morrow we shall resume this subject; meantime, I must fly." And she would have withdrawn her arm from Mr. Lyndsay's, but he detained her.

"No," said he; "before we part, promise me solemnly that you will lay open to me the whole of this dark transaction—strange thoughts have taken possession of my mind. I will no longer connive at this mystery."

It was too dark to see the working of Mrs. St. Clair's features; but he felt the hand he held tremble in his grasp.

"To-morrow, then—to-morrow, dear Mr. Lyndsay, I promise to satisfy you more fully," said she in a voice faint from agitation; "till then be silent, I conjure you; for Gertrude's sake be silent. Oh! do not detain me—there is the warning bell."

And she darted forwards, and ran till she reached the door, then turning round, she pressed Lyndsay's hand, and in breathless accents whispered, "For Ger-

trude's sake, then, you will be silent till to-morrow—you promise me this?"

"Till to-morrow, then, be it," said he.

Mrs. St. Clair again pressed his hand in token of gratitude, then entered softly, and stole upstairs to change her dress, while Mr. Lyndsay, as he walked openly and deliberately to his apartment, thought, "She has got the better of me, I fear, after all; but to-morrow will show."

END OF VOL. I

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